

Righteousness: from Law or from Faith?  
Romans 10:5–17  
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While the religions of the world are very different, most share a central theme: there is something you have to do to achieve their goal.

True Christianity teaches something different: grace.

But that's a blow to our ego.

Too often, Christianity is distorted by those who want to stay in control.

All of these responses are talking about righteousness, but prescribe different ways of reaching it.

Paul talks about this difference, describing "the righteousness that is based on the law" and "the righteousness based on faith." The distinction couldn't be more critical. One is from God and one not. One leads to despair; the other to freedom and life.

The Righteousness that is based on the Law.

There is a sense in which this idea about being justified by keeping the law is correct.

Paul says that this is what Moses writes about. "the person who does the commandments shall live by them."

The Law makes a promise: do this and live. Keep this Law perfectly and you are justified.

Sinful people like this idea. It clings to them – even to Christians.

We say things like, "If your faith was stronger, you wouldn't have this problem." "Peter could have kept walking on the water if he just had enough faith. You could do even more if you believe." Such popular, pious sounding ways to kill people with the Law!

Like Moses' teaching, they're technically right, but not very helpful for accomplishing anything. A promise is made with conditions. But what good is it if we cannot meet the conditions?

Or maybe we try to reinsert ourselves into salvation in other ways.

"Who will ascend into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down) or "who will ascend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead."

Do we put ourselves at the center of salvation in Christ? As if we need to do something to get Christ's work?

There is a glimmer of truth in these things – but always out of reach. Keep the Law and live.

But only one who is perfect in every way can have the righteousness that comes from the Law. And so there is only One who does this.

In Christ, God reveals something amazing: The Righteousness of Faith

"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Rom 10:4)

That righteousness is not based on our work but on His.

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (Rom 10:8). God comes to you. God gives you the faith to receive His gifts. God gives you the words to confess. All of it comes from Him. All of it is a gift.

Jesus is Lord... God raised Him from the dead . . . You will be saved (Rom 10:9). All of these are His work. They come from outside of yourself.

Faith in Christ is the great equalizer. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile in their salvation (Rom 10:12).

The gift of faith.

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).

The Gift of faith comes through the Gospel – preached or read, combined with water or with bread and wine – God comes to us in the means of grace. It is He who is acting.

It's hard for us to understand, but even though He speaks, many do not hear.

But God does not give up. He keeps calling to us.

And remember that you, too, are sent. Not all are called to be pastors, but all Christians are called to speak.

This keeps us from distorting Romans and turning God's gracious invitation into a work. It's not telling us that confessing Jesus is the work that leads to salvation.

Here God is doing another gracious, loving thing: He invites us to participate in His mission. As a response to the faith that He gives, He calls us to speak to those in our lives.

Our Lord Jesus has come to us and accomplished everything for our salvation. He has called us by His Gospel, and He calls us to witness.