

What do we hope to accomplish?

This pamphlet challenges the misconception among many evangelicals that Romans Chapter 10 supports public or private confession of faith as a prerequisite to salvation from the penalty of sin (i.e., justification).

What is the Issue?

A Gospel presentation that requires confession via “the sinner’s prayer (or similar) as a prerequisite to salvation (rather than as ongoing element of discipleship) is now very popular, but very wrong.

In most cases, Romans Chapter 10 is used as the basis for this error by selecting verses outside of their context and without sufficient regard to clear instruction elsewhere in Scripture.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel message is found in Rom. 3, but may be summarized as follows:

- You and I are sinners. One sin is sufficient to put you in this category. [Rom. 2:14-15; 3:10-20; 3:23; 5:12; 7:15]
- The penalty for even one sin is separation from the sinless glory of God’s presence. [Rom. 6:23a] So, when you die you do not qualify for Heaven, but are destined to eternal separation from God in a place of torment—Hell.
- If living a sinless life depended on us, we would all go to Hell. However, God, in an act of grace, provided the means by which we may qualify for Heaven—Jesus Christ, who lived a sinless life, willingly gave His life on the cross as a payment for the sins you have and will commit in your life. [Rom. 3:23-25; 4:24-25; 5:6-10, 15-17; 6:23b]

- To invoke this ransom, God asks only that you believe (have faith in, trust) His offer. [Rom. 4:21]. Scripture says our role is based on one verb—belief. Belief triggers God’s application of saving grace. [Rom. 1:16; 3:22, 24, 26; 4:3].

In contrast to faith, prayer is work

God’s Word clearly defines prayer as work.

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”
[Col. 4:12]

“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;”

[Rom. 15:30]

Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

[2Cor. 1:11]

The question is whether one can help God in the process of obtaining their salvation by adding something to God’s plan? Let’s see.

Grace versus works

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

[Rom. 11:6]

The answer is no, apparently not. Grace is ‘unmerited favor.’ It consists of blessings bestowed independent of any effort (work) on the part of the recipient.

The word¹ ‘believe’ in the New Testament means: to be persuaded of, place confidence in, or entrust. One may act on belief, but the belief comes first, then the act. So it is with faith (salvation) and works (discipleship).

To require any labor or self-effort (works) on the part of the believer is equivalent to proclaiming that the shed blood of Jesus Christ only partially paid for our sin and that we must somehow ‘help’ God make one last payment. This nullifies the concept of grace as unmerited favor. [See also Rom. 4:4-8; 5:1,18; 9:32-33]

Chapter 10—Witnessing 101

So, if: (1) salvation is solely by grace without works, and, (2) prayer is a work, then what does Romans 10 talking about?

In chapters 1-9, Paul makes clear his mission is the Gospel; why it is needed, how it is obtained, and how it influences our lives. Then comes chapter 10—Paul’s instruction on witnessing to Israel, a people steeped in religion (and, therefore, also applicable to most churches and believers today).

[10:1] The subject is still salvation.

[10:2] Minus sound doctrine, zeal is tragic.

[10:3] Israel’s sin was failing to see that the Mosaic Law was meant to point to a need for salvation. Instead, they attempted to relate to God by their own efforts.

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

¹ πιστεωω, pisteuo

[Rom. 3:19]

[10:4] Christ’s death *should* have put an end to their self-righteousness ways had they been open to the truth. *Notice the emphasis on ‘belief’ (grace).*

[10:5] True, you can get to heaven by works, but only if you were obedient to the *entire* law *all* the time. [cp. Lev. 18:5]

[10:6-7] Paul refers to Deu. 30:11-14 where God tells Israel that the requirement to do *all* of the law *all* of the time was clear from day one; *not* a secret, *not* hidden, and *not* inaccessible. Israel’s current predicament is that they were trusting in their compliance to the Mosaic Law, which they clearly—not a one of them (except Christ)—had not satisfied!

Notice that Paul, in explaining Israel’s predicament, adds nothing to the salvation prerequisite of faith. True righteousness is triggered by a single act of faith in God’s provision for sin. True *faith* recognizes the shortcomings of works-based religion.

How Paul witnessed to religious folks (via expanded paraphrase and commentary). . .

[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;”*

What do these Scriptures mean (you know them well)? You know your predicament and I’ve preached the Gospel of salvation by faith alone. You understand it and can repeat the key concepts back in your own words. It also seems that you believe the Gospel—which I have declared. [That is...]

[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.”*

What About the Sinner's Prayer?

The Role of Romans Chapter 10 in Presenting the Gospel

The Greek word translated ²“confess” means ‘to agree with.’ So, the verse may be paraphrased and expounded as, “Since you verbally agree concerning my Lord’s role in your salvation (soon to be your Lord, as well), then if you believe it (as opposed to simply accommodating me in the hope I will withdraw), then comes salvation.”

[10:10] *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

The Greek word translated ³“unto” means ‘with respect to’ or ‘concerning.’ Paul continues his point from verse 9. “Repeating my thoughts aren’t what matters, but believing the Gospel does matter. It is your belief that triggers salvation and your mouth that communicates back to me what has already occurred.”

Paul says that you trigger salvation by what you believe, but that he (Paul) won’t know what you have believed or that you have believed until you tell him (confess). This is made clearer by 1 John 4:15. Every believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit which immediately takes up residence in them when they believe (1 Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13)—not when they subsequently confess to what they have believed. 1 John 4:15 says that a valid confession of Christ comes only after God has *already* sealed them. Thus, the individual *was already saved* when the confession is made. Otherwise, the confession is the work

of the old nature or human spirit (rather than the Holy Spirit) and is a sin (Rom.14:23). Therefore, it cannot honor God, and is meaningless.

[10:11] Recognizing that some will confuse the new believer’s response *to Paul* as some form of prerequisite for salvation *by God*, Paul focuses on the act of belief as the point of salvation.

“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

That is, the person who believes the Gospel is saved and, because they are not ashamed of what they have believed, will tell you when asked (cp. Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:33). Thus, Paul explains what he means by verse 10 (and also verse 1:16).

[10:12] The word ⁴Jesus literally means, “Jehovah is salvation.” The word ⁵Christ means literally, “anointed.” His name, literally, was “God’s anointed savior among us.” It was more than a label; it was a call to faith. The Greek word for ⁶‘call upon’ means to summon, appeal to, entitle, or invoke (see Acts 9:14,21). Calling upon Christ’s name meant to invoke (or believe) on His name—that he was who He claimed to be. This prompted God’s act of Grace by accounting your sin as covered by Christ’s blood and dispatching the indwelling Holy Spirit.

“There is no distinction that can be made between the Jewish believers and Gentile believers—the Lord has plenty of salvation to spread around to anyone who invokes Him.”

[10:13] *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Anyone—even those who couldn’t speak or write—could still place their faith in who He claimed to be (as described by His name) and become saved by that belief, “Anyone who invokes His name (who is my Lord) shall be saved.”

[10:14-15] Your salvation is triggered by your belief, which requires someone to share the Gospel—not through their lifestyle, but by explaining what the Gospel means even to those who do not at first seek it.

“How can salvation be triggered if they haven’t believed? How can they believe if they haven’t heard? How will they hear unless someone witnesses to them. How will the Gospel be proclaimed unless witnesses are sent out among the people. As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that proclaim the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things.”

The next time you hear someone present the Gospel in a way that requires some form of confession as a prerequisite to salvation—or any other ‘add-on’—challenge him or her.

Confession, prayer, or any other addition to grace as a salvation prerequisite is a heresy and needs to be identified as such.

Workman Ministries

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. [2Tim.2:15]

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² *homologeō*, ὁμολογεῖν: “to say the same thing at the same place and time as another, i.e. to agree with, assent.”

³ εἰς, ice: a primary preposition indicating a point *already* reached or entered. Does your version say, “for?” Think of a wanted poster, “Jesse James wanted for murder.” He’s wanted for what he has *already* done—not for what we want him to do.

⁴ Ἰησοῦς

⁵ Χριστός

⁶ ἐπικαλεῖο, epikaleomai