

Believe in Your Heart That God Raised Jesus From the Dead

by John Piper

Believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead means confidence that God is for you and not against you, and that he has closed ranks with you and is pursuing you with goodness and mercy all the days of your life.

Duration: 27:15

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:11-14, Matthew 6:33, John 3:13, Romans 10:6-8, Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, John Piper explores the connection between the Old Testament law and the righteousness of faith. He begins by referencing Deuteronomy chapter 30, where Moses assures the people that God's commandments are not too difficult to follow. Piper emphasizes that the righteousness of faith is not based on legalism or works, but on trusting in God's grace to transform our hearts. He then delves into Paul's interpretation of the law in Romans 10:6-8, highlighting how Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the ultimate goal of God's plan. Piper encourages listeners to study and understand the complexity of these verses in order to grasp the profound connection between the Old Testament and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.desiringgod.org. One of my aims this morning is to help clarify, as well as I can, what it means in Romans 10, 9, to believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead. The reason that needs clarification is because Satan does that, and Satan will not be saved.

Satan also confesses that Jesus is Lord. Again and again, it says in the Gospels, when Jesus met demons, I know who you are, the Holy One of God. You are the Son of God.

What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Satan and all his forces have no doubt whatsoever about the identity of Jesus Christ. He is Son of God and Lord of all, which puts a question to every individual in this room this morning. Is your acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord and your belief in your heart that God raised him from the dead like Satan's leading to destruction or like Paul's leading to salvation? That's a very, very important question.

And what I'd like to do then is notice with you the context of this passage here, Romans 10, 9, where it talks about believing in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. And the first thing we need to do is observe that there's a problem that Paul is trying to solve behind Romans 9 to 11. And the problem is this.

How is it that Jews, the chosen people of God, are now rejecting Jesus, their Messiah? For whom they've been waiting for so long, Paul agonizes with the curse that Israel is bringing upon herself by rejecting Jesus, Romans 9, 3, and he struggles and says it is his heart's desire and prayer to God in Romans 10, 1, that they might be saved. How can it be that the people of God who lived under the tutoring of God in the law for so many centuries are now rejecting the one who comes as the goal and fulfillment of that very law? Now, here in Romans 9, 30 to 10, 10, roughly, Paul gives us an answer to why the Jews are rejecting Jesus. He rejects one explanation very decisively, namely the explanation that, well, the reason the Jews are rejecting Jesus is because Jesus is so different from the law.

The law taught them one thing. Jesus teaches them another. How can we expect them to believe Jesus when he contradicts the law? Paul repudiates the notion that the reason Jesus was rejected is because the Jews were being faithful to the law, but Jesus was so different from the law.

That's not the case. On the contrary, the explanation which Paul puts forward is this. The Jews had misunderstood the heart and true meaning of their own law.

And therefore, when Jesus comes as the goal and consummation and climax and fulfillment of that law, they misunderstand him, too. They missed the point of the one and there they missed the point. Therefore, they missed the point of the other.

Look at Romans nine, verse thirty one, and we'll see what Paul saw as the heart of the Old Testament law. Israel, who pursued the law of righteousness, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works.

Now, do you see what that little phrase as if implies for Paul? It implies that the law never was intended to be pursued by works, but only to be pursued by faith. That's what the heart of the law taught. When God made a covenant with his people, Israel at Mount Sinai, he did not make the divine requirement that they should earn their salvation and work their way to heaven.

On the contrary, the requirement at Sinai was trust the mercy of God that is working for you and that all your obedience flow from the joy of faith. That's the heart of the law, as Paul understands it. And that's exactly what Jesus came to teach.

Jesus said forsake all your reliance on works of the law. Trust wholly in the mercy of God. Let all your obedience flow from the joy of faith in the mercy of God.

But since Israel had missed the point of the law, therefore, they missed the point of Jesus. And when it says here in verse thirty three that they stumbled, there's a double meaning. They stumble over Jesus Christ, the stumbling stone, precisely because they had already stumbled over the true meaning of their own law.

And now it becomes clear, I think, what Paul's answer is to the question. Why is it that the Jews in Paul's day, by and large, not entirely, but by and large, were rejecting Jesus as their Messiah? It was not because Jesus came and contradicted the law and they held true to the law and therefore rejected Jesus. It was rather that Jesus was the goal, the fulfillment, the reaffirmation of what the law stood for.

And therefore, having misconstrued the law and twisted it into works, they also misconstrued Jesus and felt him as a threat to their own righteousness. The message of the law and the message of Christ are essentially one message. Namely, God has taken the initiative.

God has loved us. God has drawn near to us. God has redeemed us.

God has come to be your God, forsake works, forsake self-reliance, love him, hold to him, trust in him, walk in his ways. That's the word from the Old Testament law. That's the word from Jesus Christ.

And that's why here in Romans 10 for. When it says Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness for everyone who believes, it does not mean end in the sense of termination, abolition, contradiction. It means end in the sense of goal, climax, consummation, fulfillment, which is the normal meaning of the Greek word behind in.

Christ is what the law has been about all along. And now in verses five through 10 of this chapter, 10 of Romans, what Paul wants to do is show from the Old Testament that this is so that already what the law had been teaching is what Jesus came to reaffirm and command, even the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and faith in that resurrection. Now, let's try to follow Paul here.

Put on your thinking caps with me, because verses six to eight are not easy. They are complex. And I think in order to understand them, we have to really bear down.

But I think we can do it if we try hard for a few minutes. Let's read verses five through eight. Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by it or shall live by them.

But the righteousness based on faith says. Do not say in your heart who shall ascend into heaven. And Paul adds his little Christian application, that is, to bring Christ down or who will descend into the abyss, that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.

But what does it say? The word is near you on your lips and in your heart. That is the word of faith which we preach. Now, a quick reading of that text is going to probably lead you to the exact opposite conclusion from what I just argued from Romans 9:32, because it looks like from the beginning of verse six, which starts with a but that there is a contrast between the righteousness which is from the law in verse five and the righteousness which is from faith in verse six.

I don't think there is a contrast for three reasons. One, we've seen in verse 32 of Romans nine that what the law really intended to teach was not works, but faith that doesn't get wiped out just because of a little difficulty here. Second, the word, but at the beginning of Romans 10, six can be just as easily translated and it is not a strong adversative.

And three, the text that Paul chooses to use in verses six to eight of Romans 10 to illustrate the righteousness of faith comes straight out of Deuteronomy, which is the law. If he had been intending to show a sharp contrast between law and gospel or law and faith, he would have really blundered to use Deuteronomy chapter 30 verses 11 to 14 to illustrate the righteousness which comes from faith. So what I think Paul is doing in verses five through 10 is justifying and illustrating his assertion that Christ is the goal, the climax, the fulfillment of what the law really taught.

He is not against the law, nor is the righteousness that the law taught different from the righteousness that Jesus taught the righteousness that the law commands and the righteousness that Jesus gives are one

righteousness. And we attain them both in the same way, namely. Through faith.

Now, what Paul does here in verses six to eight in these very strange words is try to show that the righteousness from faith is already there in the Old Testament, and he quotes Deuteronomy chapter 30 verses 11 to 14. And I think in order to see how he does it, we need to go back there and look at that. So turn with me back to Deuteronomy chapter 30.

That's the fifth book in the Old Testament, the climax and heart of the Old Testament law, Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 11 through 14. And see if you in reading this would get the same impression that Paul got. Namely, this is the voice of the righteousness of faith talking, not legalism or works.

Here's what it says. Moses says to the people, the commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say who will go up for us to heaven and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it.

Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.

And if we read on a little farther, we would add and therefore live. Now, isn't the plain, clear meaning of that passage that Moses is teaching that the commandments of God are not impossible to perform? They are there to do. They can be done.

They must be done. But that's the way the Pharisees talk. That's exactly what the Pharisees thought.

Of course, the laws can be done. And they cataloged them, 613 of them. And they did them, they thought.

So how is it that when Paul read this text, he heard the righteousness of faith talking and didn't hear Pharisee presumption talking? The answer, I think, is suggested five verses earlier in Deuteronomy 30, verse six. Deuteronomy 30, verse six explains that the reason God's command is not too hard is because God himself gives the power and the ability to love him and obey him and live. It says the Lord, your God, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.

Moses is deeply aware that without a supernatural work of God in every one of your hearts, you can't love God. Or obey God and live, your hearts must be circumcised, the old callous deadness of the unspiritual you cut away and thrown away and leaving bare the livid, sensitive tissue that can be touched by the living God. Therefore, when he says a few verses later in verse 11, the command of God to love and obey him is not hard.

He doesn't mean it's not hard because we have so much moral strength and vigor and power. He means it's not hard because God Almighty circumcises the hearts of his people, moves them to love him, writes the law in their hearts, causes them to walk in his ways and have life. That's why it's not hard.

And that's why Paul saw the righteousness of faith talking here, because the only person who can say truly without becoming a legalist, the laws of God are not hard. They are not burdensome. As first John 5 says, is the person who is trusting, resting in the sovereign, enabling grace of God to transform our hearts, make us love him and walk in the paths of righteousness.

The commandment is near because God has drawn near. Now, what does Paul do with that, having read that and learned that from the Old Testament, what does he do with it in verses six to eight? Let me try to paraphrase this for you and see if I can help make sense out of those little parentheses. Paul says something like this.

Now, if the law taught that the only way to lead a righteous and a holy life was not by our heroic strivings, but by simply resting in the mercy of God to circumcise our hearts and transform us so that we can see him and love him, then all men ought to see a foreshadowing of Jesus here who came down from heaven to reach us and came up from the grave to reach us. Now, let me show you how. Verse six, just as then, so also now no one should ever say the demand of God is too high.

I can't reach it. It's beyond me. Why? Because Christ has come down from heaven in the incarnation, God has taken the initiative to close ranks with us with us who can't get up to him because of our inability or verse seven, nobody speaking in faith would ever say the demands of God are too deep.

They're way down there where I can't reach them. It's hopeless because Paul says Christ was raised from the dead. He has come up out of the abyss.

He has come after us in the resurrection. He's the one who's closing ranks with us. Sure, we're helpless, but he has come to us.

Therefore, faith never says hope is inaccessible. Obedience is inaccessible. Life is inaccessible.

Rather, faith recognizes that even though even though we are helpless. God has taken the initiative to seek us in the incarnation and the resurrection. That's what faith doesn't say.

It doesn't say it's hopeless. It's hopeless. Verse eight says what it says.

The word is near you on your lips, in your heart. That is the word of faith which we preach. In Deuteronomy 30, the righteousness of faith had said, I trust God to circumcise my heart to make me love God, to cause me to walk in his statutes, to cleave to him and obey him, to put his will on my lips and in my heart that I might do it and live.

And Paul hears in Deuteronomy the word of faith and says, that's the way it is with Christ. That's exactly what my message of faith is about. It's a word of faith.

And God wants when I preach. Right this very minute to put it on your lips and in your heart, that's what he wants more than anything. And verse 10 of chapter 10 says.

The heart is the family. Dr. A.B. Johnson, emergency at Deaconess on line two. Are you here, Dr. A.B.? Evidently, they thought you were here.

Holding. He doesn't seem to be here, Elsie. You can tell him that must be one of his patients.

Why don't we stop and pray for that emergency right now? Lord, we don't know who this is. One of the things that has moved me in preparing for this message. Is that in crises and intention, we tend to feel alienated, we tend to feel like you're too far away to help.

And the message that I've just been saying is you're not far. You've come down from the distance. You've come up from the unreachable realm of the dead and you are pursuing that person right now who's in

trouble for your good and for his or her good.

May they know it. And trust you and be healed. In Jesus name.

Amen. Verse 10 of chapter 10. Since the heart is the faculty of believing and the mouth is the organ of confessing and the Old Testament said that God has taken the initiative to put his word, his will, his command, the love of him on our lips and in our heart.

Paul draws the inference in verse nine. To where we're heading, that what the law was after all along was this. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord coming down from heaven and believe in your heart that God has raised him up from the dead, you will be saved.

And now we're back where we started. What then does it mean on the basis of all of this that we are to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead in our hearts? It can't mean mere agreement with a historical fact, and I fear that that's the case with many. If you've gotten that far, it can't mean that because Satan does that and Satan is not saved, he trembles at the truth.

Faith does not ask despairingly who will go down into the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead. That is, faith never says, I agree with the satanic temptation that righteousness and life and hope are beyond reach. On the contrary, what faith says is.

It is not as though Christ were waiting in the grave, waiting in the abyss for us by some strength of our own to go down there and reach him up to be our savior on his own by his initiative. God has raised him from the dead. He is pursuing us with life and hope and blessing.

So the meaning of the resurrection in this scripture is God is for us. God is closing ranks with us. He is endeavoring to overcome all alienation and distance that sense that he is too far up or too far down.

The resurrection is God's declaration to Israel and to the church, to us that we cannot work our way to glory, but that God is going to do the impossible to get us there. And that means, then, that belief in your heart that God has raised him from the dead is this. It is confidence that God is for you and not against you.

It is confidence that he has closed ranks with you and is pursuing you with goodness and with mercy all the days of your life. It is confidence that he is transforming your heart, circumcising it and writing his law upon you and moving you to love him. And it is confidence that he will save you.

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ means being so confident in the power and the love of God in the resurrection of Jesus that no fear of worldly loss and no greed for worldly gain can allure us to leave his will. That's the difference between Satan and the Saints. And may God circumcise the heart of every person in this room that we might love him and walk in his paths and rest in the resurrection.

Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. At 1-888-346-4700.

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