

# Romans 10:5-7 Commentary

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## Summary of Romans 9-11

Romans 9	Romans 10	Romans 11
<b>Past Election</b>	<b>Present Rejection</b>	<b>Future Reception</b>
God's Sovereignty Israel's Election by God	Man's responsibility Israel's Rejection of God	God's Ways Higher God Not Rejecting Israel

Romans 10:5 For [Moses writes](#) that the [man](#) who [practices](#) the [righteousness](#) which is [based](#) on [law](#) shall [live](#) by that [righteousness](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [Mouses gar graphei \(3SPA\)](#) [ten dikaiosunen ten ek \[tou\] nomou hoti o poiesas \(AAPMSN\)](#) [auta anthropos zesetai \(3SFMI\)](#) [en autois.](#)

**Amplified:** For Moses writes that the man who [can] practice the righteousness (perfect conformity to God's will) which is based on the Law [with all its intricate demands] shall live by it. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ESV:** For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ([ESV](#))

**ICB:** Moses writes about being made right by following the law. He says, "A person who does these things will have life forever because of them."

**NIV:** Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NKJV:** For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."

**NLT:** For Moses wrote that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Moses writes of righteousness-by-the-Law when he says that 'the man who does those things shall live by them' - which is theoretically right but impossible in practice. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** For Moses writes that the man who does the righteousness which is of the law shall live in its sphere.

**Young's Literal:** for Moses doth describe the righteousness that is of the law, that, 'The man who did them shall live in them,'

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	WORK OF SALVATION

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**Are you confused about God's plan for Israel?** Then I highly recommend Tony Garland's 12 Hour Course on **Romans 9-11** in which he addresses in depth the question of **What Will Happen to Israel?** ([click](#)) or see the individual lectures below)

- [Romans 9:1-5 Paul's Sorrow Concerning Israel](#)
- [Romans 9:6-13 Children of the Promise](#)
- [Romans 9:14-24 The Potter and the Clay](#)
- [Romans 9:25-33 A Remnant Will be Saved](#)
- [Romans 10:1-13 The Righteousness of God](#)
- [Romans 10:14-21 Has Israel Not Heard?](#)
- [Romans 11:1-6 God Has Not Cast Away The Jews](#)
- [Romans 11:7-15 Life from the Dead](#)
- [Romans 11:16-24 Two Olive Trees](#)
- [Romans 11:25-36 The Salvation of Israel](#)

Note that when you click the preceding links, each link will in turn give you several choices including an **Mp3 message** and brief transcript notes. The Mp3's are long (avg 70+ min) but are in depth and thoroughly Scriptural with many quotations from the Old Testament, which is often much less well understood than the NT by many in the church today. Garland takes a literal approach to Scripture, and his love for the Jews and passion to see them saved comes through very clearly in these 12 hours of teaching! Take your home Bible Study group through this series if you dare. Take notes on the tapes as the transcripts are a very abbreviated version of the audio messages. This course is highly recommended for all who love Israel! I think you will agree that Tony Garland, despite coming to faith after age 30 as an engineer, clearly has been given a special anointing by God to promulgate the truth concerning Israel and God's glorious future plan for the Jews. Garland has also produced more than 20 hours of superb audio teaching in his verse by verse commentary on the [Revelation](#) (in depth transcripts also available) which will unravel (in a way you did not think was possible considering the plethora of divergent interpretations) God's final message of the triumph and return of the our Lord Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords! Maranatha!

**FOR MOSES WRITES THAT THE MAN WHO PRACTICES THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS BASED ON LAW SHALL LIVE BY THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS: Mouses gar graphei (3SPA1) ten dikaiosunen ten ek (tou) nomou hoti o poiasas (AAPMSN) auta anthropos zesetai (3SFMI) en autois:**

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- Nehemiah 9:29; Ezekiel 20:11,13,21; Luke 10:27,28; Galatians 3:12

**For (gar)** introduces an explanation. Always pause and ponder this strategic **term of explanation**.

**Listen to Dr J Vernon McGee: [Romans 10:4-8 Mp3](#)**

This quotation is actually not Moses' words but God's word to and through Moses. Paul quoted from the Old Testament to prove to any Jewish readers that they did not even understand their own Law.

**Paul** began with

'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD.  
(Leviticus 18:5)

This verse states the purpose of the Law: if you obey it, you live. The religious Jew would argue

"But we did obey it!"

To which **Paul** would respond...

"You may have obeyed it outwardly, but you did not believe it from your heart." (Ro 2:28, 29<sup>note</sup>)

The Mosaic Law makes the path to righteousness through the law plain. If you want to live by the law (find life through the law), you must do the law - and do it completely and perfectly. The Amplified Version accentuates this demand...

For Moses writes that the man who [can] practice the righteousness (**perfect conformity to God's will**) which is based on the Law [**with all its intricate demands**] shall live by it.

One Jewish interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 was that those who keep the commandments merit (earn) eternal life. This misinterpretation of the passage appears in Jewish texts alongside the view that God elects Israel as a whole to be saved.

The verse in fact says that if (an impossible "if") one could keep the law in its entirety, he would be acceptable to God, but the Law must be taken in whole or not at all...

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10)

In **Ezekiel** we read a similar teaching...

And I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, **if a man observes them, he will live**... 13 But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes, and they rejected My ordinances, by which, **if a man observes them, he will live**; and My sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them... 21 "But the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, by which, **if a man observes them, he will live**; they profaned My sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness. (Ezekiel 20:11,13,21)

James and Ezekiel remind us that if it were possible to keep the law even for a while, a person who failed in only one point of the law would remain just as lost and under God's wrath as a person who failed in every point of the law.

Anyone who is not utterly self-deceived realizes the impossibility of never stumbling even in the smallest way. And the foolish person who does presumptuously rely on his own obedience to the law will attain only the imperfect and unacceptable righteousness that his imperfect obedience merits. In God's sight, such righteousness is wholly unrighteous and can never remove sin or earn divine favor. Because of the countless rabbinical traditions that had been developed over the previous several hundred years, the Jews of Paul's time had so lowered and replaced with manmade traditions, God's divine standard of righteousness, that many Jews actually believed they lived in satisfactory obedience to the law. Witness for example the rich young ruler, who after Jesus citation of several Old Testament commandments, responded with what seems to be a sincere reply...

"All these things I have kept" (Mt 19:20).

Only Christ fulfilled "all these things" in the Law perfectly (cf Mt 5:17).

To repeat, whoever relies on his own obedience to the Law is held accountable for everything that the Law requires. The righteousness which is based on law demands absolute perfection in every detail of the law.

The truths that **Paul** emphasizes here may be summarized as...

**First**, the man who pursues salvation by trying to keep the law will be judged on the basis of that effort.

**Second**, it is impossible to keep all the law.

**Third**, the inevitable failure of works righteousness results in eternal damnation.

If a Jew were to receive righteousness by keeping the demands of the Law, that would be human achievement (Ro 4:1, 2, 3note) and thus the righteousness would not be a gracious gift from God.

In short, Paul is saying that God gave laws for various aspects of the lives of His people, but since obviously no one could keep them perfectly another means of eternal life must exist, which Paul explains in the next verse.

**Middletown Bible...**

**The legal formula** for salvation is this: DO AND LIVE! (Keep all the commandments and keep them perfectly and keep them continually and you will live!)

**The grace/cross formula** for salvation is this: BELIEVE AND LIVE! Believe and rest upon what Christ has already done (His finished work) and you shall have eternal life (Jn 3:16; 5:24; 6:47 etc.).

Man can never say, "IT'S DONE! I have done it! I've made it! I have kept the law and have kept it perfectly! (I have reached London by swimming!)" Utterly impossible! But what man could not do by law, God could do and did do by grace (see Ro 8:3, 4). What could not be done by swimming was accomplished by getting on the ship!

**Steven Cole** - My subject is, "How to be saved." When I was first trained in how to share my faith (over 45 years ago now!), I was instructed not to use words like "saved" or "salvation," because to most people, they were meaningless religious jargon. Rather, I was told that I should focus on how Jesus can give us abundant life here and now. Tell people how Christ can give peace, joy, freedom from guilt, harmonious relationships, and other present blessings.

While the gospel does bring many wonderful present blessings, its main message is about being eternally saved or lost. In Romans 10, Paul uses salvation or saved in Ro 10:1, 9, 10, 13. The concept of salvation or being right before God permeates the entire chapter. Paul is still hammering home the same message that he has been preaching throughout the entire letter (Ro 1:16-17), that the only way to be right with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not by good works. You may ask, "Why does Paul keep repeating this?" The answer is, "Because we're all so prone to try to get saved by our own good works." We need this message hammered into our works-oriented brains!

Before we work through the text, let me emphasize the practical value of these verses: At this moment either you are saved or you are lost. There is no in between category. If you are saved, it means that if you died today, you would spend eternity with Jesus in heaven. If you are lost and died today, you would spend eternity in the torment of hell. Those are the only options.

As I've said many times, saved is a radical word. If life seems to be going okay, then you don't sense that you need to be saved. If you think that you're a basically good person and that your goodness will get you into heaven when you die, then you won't feel a need to be saved. If you think that Jesus came to give us a few tips on how to have a happy life, then you don't realize your true condition before God. You need to be saved because you're perishing!

When that cruise ship was sailing smoothly through the Mediterranean Sea last week, if you had rushed into the dining room and yelled, "Get into the life boats now," the passengers would have thought that you were crazy. They didn't need to be saved, thank you. You would only be interrupting their dinner. But a few minutes later when the ship hit the rock and began listing as it took on water, everyone's attention was focused on being saved from a watery grave. The truth is, your boat is going to hit the rock called "death," and so you need to be ready for that inevitable moment. Life may be going smoothly at the moment, but if you're not right before God, then you need to be saved.

The angel told Joseph (Matt. 1:21), "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Jesus said (Luke 19:10), "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." He said (Luke 5:32), "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." He was not implying that some are righteous enough that they don't need salvation. Rather, some mistakenly think that they are righteous enough to get into heaven by their own works. But the truth is, we all have sinned and deserve God's judgment (Rom. 3:23). Thus we all need Jesus to save us from that judgment. So here again Paul says,

To be saved, you must recognize that you cannot save yourself and you must truly believe in Jesus as the risen Savior and Lord.

In Romans 10, Paul is still dealing with the question that dominates chapters 9-11, "If the Jews are God's chosen people, why are most of them rejecting Christ?" In chapter 9, Paul pointed out that it never was God's purpose to save all the Jews. Rather, His

purpose was to save a remnant according to His gracious choice. The emphasis is clearly on God's sovereignty in salvation.

But if God is sovereign, then are unbelievers not responsible for missing out on salvation? From 9:30 through chapter 10, Paul argues that the Gentiles attained the righteousness that comes by faith, while most of the Jews were lost because they sought to establish their own righteousness by works. They didn't trust in Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Ro 10:4). Their sinful pride kept them from salvation.

In Romans 10:5-10, Paul contrasts the righteousness based on the law (Ro 10:5) with the righteousness that comes through faith (Ro 10:6-10). To be saved by keeping the law, you must keep it perfectly. But to be saved by faith, you trust in what God has done in sending His Son to die for your sins and raising Him from the dead. Salvation is not by keeping the law, but by faith in Christ.

1. To be saved, you must recognize that you cannot save yourself by keeping God's law (Ro 10:5).

Romans 10:5: "For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness." "For" shows that Paul is explaining 10:4. He refers to Leviticus 18:5, "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord." In that verse, "live" does not refer to eternal life, but to enjoying God's blessings in the Promised Land (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans], pp. 647-648).

But for Paul, life is equivalent to justification, or righteous standing before God. In Galatians 3:11-12, Paul also cites Leviticus 18:5 to contrast the attempt to approach God by keeping the law with the way of faith: "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'" Then in 3:21-22, he adds, "Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."

Paul is making the same point in Romans 10:5: if you want to gain eternal life by keeping the law, you must obey it perfectly. As Paul has just stated, the Jews were trying to establish their own righteousness by works of the law (9:32; 10:3). Paul himself had tried that route. In Philippians 3:5-6, he lays out his Jewish pedigree: "Circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."

But at his conversion, Paul counted all of these credits as loss for the sake of Christ. He goes on (Phil. 3:9) to explain the contrast (the same one that he is drawing in Romans 10:5-10): [that I] "may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

Paul made the same point in Romans 2:12-13: "For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified." (See, also, James 2:10.)

Even though Scripture is so abundantly clear, this is the main reason that people do not trust to Christ for salvation: they think that they can save themselves by being good or by keeping God's law. The truth is, we've all repeatedly broken God's law, both outwardly and on the heart level. We've all failed to love God with all of our hearts; we've failed to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. So, as Paul explains (Rom. 3:19-20), "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." To be saved, you first must recognize that you cannot save yourself by keeping God's law. Rather, that law condemns you. ([How to Be saved](#))

**Romans 10:6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN ?' (that is, to bring Christ down ),**

**Greek:** [e de ek pisteos dikaiosune houtos legei.](#) (3SPA) [Me eipes](#) (2SAAS) [en te kardia sou.](#) [Tis anabesetai](#) (3SFM) [eis ton ouranon? tout' estin](#) (3SPA) [Christon katageginein:](#) (AAN)

**Amplified:** But the righteousness based on faith [imputed by God and bringing right relationship with Him] says, Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into Heaven? that is, to bring Christ down;

**ESV:** But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

**ICB:** But this is what the Scripture says about being made right through faith: "Don't say to yourself, 'Who will go up into heaven?'" (That means, "Who will go up to heaven to get Christ and bring him down to earth?")

**NIV:** But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down)

**NKJV:** 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)

**NLT:** But the way of getting right with God through faith says, "You don't need to go to heaven" (to find Christ and bring him down to help you).

**Phillips:** But righteousness-by-faith says something like this: 'Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?' to bring Christ down to us

**Wuest:** But the righteousness which is out of a source of faith speaks in this manner, Do not say in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? This, in its implications, is to bring Christ down.

**Young's Literal:** and the righteousness of faith doth thus speak: 'Thou mayest not say in thine heart, Who shall go up to the heaven,' that is, Christ to bring down?

#### **BUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS BASED ON FAITH SPEAKS THUS: e de ek pisteos dikaiosune houtos legei, (3SPA1):**

- Ro 3:22,25; 4:13; 9:31; Philippians 3:9; Hebrews 11:7

But the righteousness based on faith [imputed by God and bringing right relationship with Him] (Amplified)

**Righteousness** ([1343](#)) (**dikaosune** from **dikaos** [**word study**] = being proper or right in the sense of being fully justified being or in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense **dikaosune** conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God.

**Dikaosune** is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. Righteousness of God could be succinctly stated as all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides through Christ (Click here to read Pastor Ray Pritchard's interesting analysis of **righteousness** in the Gospel of Matthew).

Jesus Thy Blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head. ([Play](#))

Paul **contrasts** Moses statement in (Leviticus 18:5) with the **righteousness based on faith** (here personified as if able to speak) which says another thing.

It is clearly implied in the previous verse that the attainment of justification by a method which prescribed perfect obedience is impossible for sinful men. It is the purpose of this and the succeeding verses to declare that the Gospel requires no such impossibilities. It neither requires us to scale the heavens, nor to fathom the great abyss. It demands only faith.

#### **DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (THAT IS, TO BRING CHRIST DOWN): me eipes (2SAAS) en te kardia sou tis anabesetai (3SFMI) eis ton ouranon; tout estin (3SPA1) Christon katagagein (AAN):**

- Proverbs 30:4
- John 3:12,13; 6:33,38,50,51,58; Ephesians 4:8, 9, 10; Hebrews 1:3

Paul's will now show that the knowledge of the will of God had been made perfectly accessible and that no one was ever required to do what was impossible in order to attain it. This knowledge was neither hidden, nor far off, but was obvious and available. To prove his point Paul appeals again to the Old Testament where we read that...

"For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. 12 **It is not in heaven**, that you should say, **Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it** that we may observe it?' 13 "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' 14 "But **the word** is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. (Deut 30:11-14-note)

Note that here Romans Paul gives us the spiritual understanding of Moses' admonition in (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). Thus Paul saw

"the commandment" or "the Word" (John 1:1,17 writes that "In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word** was with God, and **the Word** was God... **the Word** became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth") as indicating "Christ, God's Word" and he thus substituted "Christ" for "the commandment." He told us that God's way of salvation was not difficult and complicated. We do not have to go to heaven to find Christ, or into the world of the dead. Christ is near to us. The Gospel of Christ, the Word of faith, is available and accessible. The sinner need not perform difficult works in order to be saved. All he has to do is trust Christ. The very Word on the lips of the religious Jews was the Word of faith. The very Law that they read and recited pointed to Christ.

And so the "**righteousness based on faith**" speaks out and says that the righteousness God provides is not unattainable. It is not in **heaven** or in the **abyss** (Ro 10:7), locations that even the most sincere and zealous man's fleshly efforts or works could never reach.

God's righteousness is present in the message, the word of (the) faith, which in the context of Romans is the Gospel which Paul has been proclaiming for the first 8 chapters. This word is effected (or realized) by exercise of personal faith, by confession with one's mouth and belief in one's heart (Ro 10:9,10). This is the truth that Paul is pressing home, the truth that this Gospel is not difficult and is not unattainable. It is only difficult or unattainable if you try to attain in your own strength and own effort, as if you could merit it. This simple truth deflates our pride and this dynamic is what must transpire if we would come and as little children receive the word implanted which is able to save our soul.

The context shows that the purpose of the apostle is to contrast the legal/works method and the Gospel method of salvation and thus to show that the one is impracticable, the other easy. By works of the law no one can be justified, whereas whoever simply calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

**Ascending** and **descending** are acts men do and Paul is saying that you don't need to "work" or perform acts to obtain the righteousness of Christ. It's as simple as receive and believe.

#### **Middletown Bible...**

The language Paul uses here is taken from Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Who shall bring Christ down from heaven? Who shall bring Christ up from among the dead ones?

"Man could do neither but God in grace meets man. It was the Father who sent His Son into the world. It was by the glory of the Father that He was raised from the dead. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son' and 'God hath raised Him from the dead'" (William Kelly).

You do not need to bring Christ down from heaven. The Father sent the Son! He has already come! It has already happened!

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1Ti 1:15).

It is a glorious, accomplished fact (which must be believed).

Christ does not need to be raised from the dead. It has already been done (1Co 15:20). It is a fact that must be believed (Ro 10:9-note). There is nothing man needs to do. God, not man, brought about the incarnation and God, not man, brought about the resurrection. Christ Jesus has accomplished all that is necessary for man's salvation. He has descended to earth, died on the Cross and has risen from the dead (1Co 15:3, 4, 5-note). These great facts need to be preached (1Co 1:18, 23) and believed (1Co 15:1-note, 1Co 15:2-note).

**"D-O"**  
**or**  
**"D-O-N-E"**

There is a wide difference between true Christianity and all the other religions of the world (Jn 14:6, Acts 4:12). The religions of the world can be summed up by two letters: **D-O**, whereas true Christianity can be summed up by four letters: **D-O-N-E**. Who can tell the relief to a burdened heart when it discovers that all is done and all has been accomplished by Another (John 19:30)? (Who can tell the relief to the swimmer who realizes that he does not need to swim to London but that he can simply get on the ship and let the ship do all the work!) See our tract entitled [DO or DONE? \(Romans 10\)](#)

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**Steven Cole** - To be saved, you must recognize that Christ has done for you what you could never do for yourself (Ro 10:6-8). Romans 10:6-8: "But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (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, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching.”

These are difficult verses and I won't pretend that I completely understand them, even after reading and re-reading numerous commentaries! But I'll try to explain them as best as I can. The opening “but” shows that Paul is contrasting the righteousness based on the law (Ro 10:5) with the righteousness based on faith. He first cites from Deuteronomy 8:17 & Deut 9:4 (“Do not say in your heart”) and then rather loosely from Deuteronomy 30:12-14, adding his own explanatory comments to link these verses to Christ. His main point is that God has always offered salvation by faith apart from human effort, even under the law.

The problem is that Deuteronomy 30:12-14 seems to say that keeping the law is within the reach of every person. But Paul cites them for an opposite meaning, that salvation has nothing to do with human effort, but rather that God has provided everything so that all we must do is to believe in Christ. How do we explain this?

First, in the Deuteronomy 8:17 & Deut 9:4 references, Moses warns Israel that when they take possession of the land of Canaan, they must not think that they have earned it because of their own righteousness. This clues us in that God's blessings come to us by grace, not by our efforts. Then Paul adds the reference from Deuteronomy 30:12-14, “It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”

“It” refers to the commandment of the law being near, but Paul replaces the commandment with Christ being near. Is he arbitrarily changing the meaning of that text to make it say something completely different? No! In Deuteronomy 30:6, Moses promised, “Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.” That is essentially the same as the new covenant promises that later came through Ezekiel 36:25-27 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. These promises point to God's forgiving our sins and imparting new life to us by His grace alone. It is only when God changes our hearts that we are then able to obey God's commandments.

But even those who have received the new birth do not obey perfectly. So why does Paul replace the commandment (in Deut. 30) with Christ? Answer: Because, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Ro 10:4). Jesus did what no one else could ever do: He perfectly fulfilled God's holy law. By His death, He satisfied the penalty of the law that we deserved. So when you believe in Christ, God imputes Christ's righteousness to your account and views you as if you perfectly fulfilled the law.

The two questions that Paul cites from Deuteronomy 30 had become proverbial expressions for doing what is impossible (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans/Apollos], p. 383). Thus Paul is saying that just as an Israelite did not need to go into heaven to bring down God's commandments, so we do not need to do the impossible by going to heaven to bring Christ down to where we live. God did that in the incarnation. Christ came to bear the curse of the law on our behalf (Gal. 3:13).

Paul changes the second question, which in Deuteronomy is, “Who will cross the sea?” into, “Who will descend into the abyss?” The sea and the abyss were somewhat interchangeable concepts in the Old Testament and in Judaism (Moo, p. 655). Paul refers to the abyss to facilitate his application to Christ's death (Moo, p. 656). There is no need to go into the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead, because God has already done that.

So Paul's point is that human effort is not necessary to procure God's righteousness. God has done it all: He sent Christ. Christ died for our sins. God raised Him from the dead. All that we must do is to believe in this word that Paul was preaching. The fact that this word “is near you” (10:8) means that you don't have to go through some difficult or impossible process (ascend into heaven; descend into the abyss) to find Christ and be saved. Rather, you can believe in Him at this moment and be saved.

Don't get lost in the difficulties of verses 6-8 and miss the application, which is: When you die and stand before God, either you will argue that you should get into heaven because you were a good person; or, with the hymn writer, you will say, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.” God in Christ did for you what you never could have done for yourself. Abandon your efforts and trust in Christ! ([How to Be saved](#))

**Romans 10:7 or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS ?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."**

**Greek:** [E, Tis katabesetai \(3SFMI\) eis ten abusson? tout' estin \(3SPAI\) Christon ek nekron anagagein. \(AAN\)](#)

**Amplified:** Or who will descend into the abyss? that is, to bring Christ up from the dead [as if we could be saved by our own efforts].  
(2)

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

**ICB:** "And do not say, 'Who will go down into the world below?'" (That means, "Who will go down to get Christ and bring him up from



death?")

**NIV:** "or 'Who will descend into the deep?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

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

**NLT:** And it says, "You don't need to go to the place of the dead" (to bring Christ back to life again).

**Phillips:** or 'who will descend into the abyss' to bring him up from the dead?

**Wuest:** Or, Who shall descend into the abyss? This, in its implications, is to bring Christ up from among those who are dead.

**Young's Literal:** or, 'Who shall go down to the abyss,' that is, Christ out of the dead to bring up.

**OR 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS (THAT IS, TO BRING CHRIST UP FROM THE DEAD: E Tis katabesetai (3SFMI) eis ten abusson? tout' estin (3SPAI) Christon ek nekron anagagein. (AAN):**

- Ro 4:25; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 3:18,22; Revelation 1:18

**Descend** ([2597](#)) (**katabaino** from **katá** = down + **baíno** = go or come) means to come or go down and so to descend from a higher to a lower place. Paul quotes Moses to establish the impossibility of accomplishing such a task to seek a Word from God and the "lunacy" of even considering it since the Word is right there in their very midst (for the Jews - see Ro 3:1, 2-note, Ro 9:3, 4-note)!

**MacArthur** - His point is that the righteousness of faith does not require some impossible odyssey through the universe to find Christ. ([The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

**McGee** - He talks about ascending up to heaven to bring it down, or going down to hell and bringing it up. My friend, the righteousness that Paul is talking about—he quotes from Deuteronomy 30:11–14—is available! You don't have to make a trip anywhere to get it. ([Romans 10:4-8 Mp3](#))

**Abyss** ([12](#)) (**abussos** from **a** = an intensifier + **buthos** =deep) means first an extremely deep or bottomless and speaks of the underworld which in Greek was the place of dead (although it is not the lake of fire).

Paul (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - 2Pe 1:21-note) substitutes "**the deep**" (abyss) for "the sea" in the Deuteronomy passage

Nor is it beyond **the sea**, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'

Paul changes the picture from one of distance to one of depth, which makes the contrast with heaven even sharper.

**MacDonald** explains that "When the apostle quotes Deuteronomy 30:13, he changes it from "Who will go over the sea" to Who will descend into the abyss. His point is that the gospel does not ask men to descend into the grave to bring Christ up from among the dead. This would be impossible, but it would also be unnecessary, because Christ has already risen from the dead. Notice that in Ro 10:6, 7 we have the two doctrines concerning Christ which were hardest for a Jew to accept—His Incarnation (Ro 1:3-note) and His Resurrection (Ro 1:4-note, cp reaction in "intellectual" Athens Acts 17:32-note) . Yet he must accept these if he is to be saved. We will see these two doctrines again in Ro 10:9, 10-note. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))