

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

Romans Chapter 10: “Being Sincere Versus Being Sincerely Wrong!”

Romans 10:1-4 Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

³ For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴ or Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Paul recognizes the zeal in the hearts of his fellow Jews. The word *zeal* had an interesting meaning to the Jew in the first-century. A *Zealot* was a term which referred to a segment of Jews who were militant, anti-Roman and radically dedicated to the Law of Moses. As Baker Bible Encyclopedia phrased it “*The Zealot regarded himself as an agent of divine judgment and redemption, resolutely and fearlessly contending against idolatry, apostasy, and collaboration.*”

The effort was put together after the death of Herod the Great (Mt. 2:22) in 6 A.D. The movement itself was rooted in the Inter-testament times of the Maccabean Rebellion. In Daniel 9:27 there is a term referred to as the “*abomination of desolation*” was going to occur to the Jewish people. Daniel revealed that in the days to come a detestable foreign idol would be placed in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:31) and would begin a period of assault against the Jewish faith for 1290 days (Dan. 12:11). This event would occur during the Inter-testament period, the “400 silent years” between Malachi and Matthew.

This came to be through a Syrian named Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC. He invaded the land with the intent of humiliating the Jews. He outlawed possession of scriptures, banned circumcision and set up pagan altars in all the Judean villages, including in the Temple. Jewish outrage grew until reaching a climax when a pig was offered on the holy altar of God, which was referred to as the *abomination of desolation*. Ironically Jesus referred to the destruction of Herod’s Temple with the same phrase (Matthew 24:15).

The seeds had been planted for the Jewish revolt out of zeal for their religion and fought back for 3 ½ years. They killed the pagan sympathizers, forced circumcision on the young boys of the villages and finally restored sacrifice in the Temple of God. Antiochus died before his troops could reach Jerusalem to stop it. The resulting celebration was the Jewish holiday *Hanukah*. The seeds of the zealot movement were firmly planted.

By the time of first-century there were many thousands of these *zealots* in the Jewish faith (Acts 20:21) and they were *zealous for all the Law*. One of Jesus’ own disciples, Simon the zealot, was actually a member of this group (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Even Paul himself subscribed to their methods (Phil. 3:6). They were sincere in the faith, but they were sincerely wrong. That leads us to the title of the lesson, *Being Sincere Versus Being Sincerely Wrong*.

The Problem: Confusing “being sincere” and “being sincerely wrong”.

There are many groups out there in the religious world who are very, very sincere. The members of ISIS, the militant Muslim terrorists, are sincere in their Muslim faith, but they are sincerely wrong in God’s eyes. The members of cults which deny Jesus Christ as the Son of the Living God are sincere, knocking doors, giving to the poor and providing education for the ignorant, but they are sincerely wrong when it comes to Jesus. The sincere Hindu will offer food from their children’s table to their idols and accept being relegated to a caste system for life in hope of something better, but they are sincerely wrong. Even the Atheist can be sincere about

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their position that God is not real, but they will be proven on that Day of Judgment to be sincerely wrong.

It is easy to sit back and make conclusions concerning the Muslim, the cults, the Hindu and the Atheist for being sincerely wrong, for it seems obvious to the casual Bible reader. It is with many of the “world approved” denominational teachings that we must be concerned about, for they are also sincerely wrong.

A) One can physically enter into covenant with Jesus.

Romans 10:5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

Paul was referencing *Leviticus 18:4-5* ‘You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God.’⁵ ‘So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD. There was the common perception among the Jews that they could earn their way to God. They felt by maintaining acts of righteousness they could attain salvation.

There are actually denominations among us that teach a similar approach of rules keeping. Some have taught by maintaining a “methodology” of instructions, one can be saved. This is not what the Bible teaches.

- Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
- Philippians 3:9 “...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...”
- 2 Timothy 1:9 “...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity...”

It is not by works we are saved, but through the grace of God through faith. We cannot *ascend into heaven* on our own merits (Rom 10:6). The rituals of infant baptisms, praying to saints, lighting candles, holy holidays and feasts, vain repetitions of prayers and a thousand other rituals are not found in New Testament Christianity. We can pretend all we want, turn our heads from the truth all we want and refuse to look in the Bible, but ignorance does not cover our sins. This does not mean the people who are trapped in this system are not sincere, for God knows they are. On the other hand He also knows they are sincerely wrong.

Jesus said in *John 12:48* “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” He is the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Jesus (*John 14:6*). He never said it was through works, but through Him.

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B) One can verbally enter into covenant with Jesus.

Romans 10:9-10 "...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

We must confess Jesus as Lord. The word Lord is *kurios* and implies much more than some verbal phrase. This word carries with it four implications.

1) It is a word of Respect.

When we want to show another respect we use *sir* or *mister*. In the first century they used Lord to address someone with respect. When we refer to Jesus as Lord, we are showing Him respect.

2) It is a word of Royalty.

All the kings, including Caesar, were referred to in the title *Lord*. This was to recognize that they are royalty. When it comes to Jesus, He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Rev 19:16).

3) It is a word of Religion.

It was also a title given before the ancient Greek gods names. *Kurios Serapis* was how the ancients pronounced Serapis. It recognized their gods as the center of their religion. When it comes to Jesus, He is the Lord, the center of our religious way of life.

4) It is a word of Rule.

The ultimate use of the word *Lord* is to describe God's rule in our lives. When Jesus is Lord, it communicates that we have surrendered our all in all to Him. He is our Master in every way.

It says that the confession is "*resulting in salvation*" and that would seem pretty clear, if that was the only verse in the Bible.

To call Jesus Lord is to say you respect Him, that you see Him as King, that you see His divinity and His rule over your life. Today however this has mutated into one of the most out of context phrases in the denominational world. Many denominations love to use this as the proof passage to the mythical "*sinner's prayer*". It typically goes like this, "*Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name. Amen*"

I have read through the Bible many times and have never found the Sinner's Prayer. I have asked many denominational preachers where this is and they cannot find it either. In fact the doctrine of the "sinner's prayer" did not arrive on the scene until the reformation and did not become popular until the twentieth century. Even Wikipedia says that there is "*no such prayer or conversion is found in the Bible...*"

What is the denominational response to this questioning? They sincerely remark it is any prayer of repentance, yet it does not say that in the Romans 10:9 passage. They point to a couple of other passages to confirm this.

- 1) The first is the thief on the cross in Luke 23:42-43. One of the thieves said to "*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!*" ⁴³ And He said to him, "*Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.*" The sincere denominational man will say,

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“Look here, there is the sinner’s prayer! He asked Jesus to save him and Jesus did!” Two problems with this is...

- a. the thief was not praying, but talking directly to Jesus.
 - b. Jesus had not yet died on the cross making the New Covenant irrelevant. This was no different than what Jesus said in *Luke 5:24* that “the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”
- 2) The second passage is *Luke 18:10-14*. In that passage, Jesus told a parable to communicate a message of needing to be humble before God. He said the Pharisee “*was praying this to himself*” in a braggadocio way. “*But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’*”¹⁴ “*I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.*” The sincere denominationalist will say, “Look, here is the sinner’s prayer! This is irrefutable evidence!” Not so, for...
- a. the *sinner* was already born into Judaism under the Law. He was already in covenant with God, but erring.
 - b. the sinner was not asking Jesus to come into his life, but recognizing his humble state before God.
 - c. this is still well before the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, placing it before the New Covenant.

Simply put, there is not one person in the New Testament that invited Jesus into their hearts through a sinner’s prayer. There are many sincere souls claiming this, but they are sincerely wrong.

C) One can audibly enter covenant with Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:14-17 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?¹⁵ How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the good news; for *Isaiah* says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?”¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Paul quotes *Isaiah* twice in this passage to overcome two possible objections of his Jewish listeners. The first objection is “Nobody preached Jesus to them back in the Old Testament”. Paul used *Isaiah 52:7* *How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’* He in essence said that the prophets did predict the coming Messiah, but the prophets were rejected.

The second objection was “But how could have they seen it? Paul responded with *Isaiah 53:1* “*Who has believed our message?*” Paul reminded them that the coming Christ was very apparent in the scriptures, but their minds were closed just as God predicted. The two following verses *Isaiah 53:2-3* gave great detail to His coming. “*And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*”² *For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that*

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we should be attracted to Him. ³ He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”

The point Paul was making was that God predicted long ago that the Jews under the Law and his contemporary comrades of the Jewish faith would reject Christ. They knew enough to reject Him in advance; they knew enough to reject Him when He was there; they continued to reject Him after the fact. The prophets cry out “*Who hath believed our report?*”

That leads us to yet another group of people, those who think they can audibly enter into the kingdom of heaven. They hear a good message, it gives them an existential feeling and somehow they think they are saved. There are actually religious groups out there that are teaching when you hear the message preached and if you have an overwhelming feeling pass over you, then you are saved. Their logic is it takes the Holy Spirit to be in you in order for you to understand the message. If you heard it and understood, then you must have the Holy Spirit, therefore you must be saved.

The Bible knows nothing of this either. Nobody entered a covenant with Jesus by simply hearing the message. Though they are sincere in their heart, they are sincerely wrong in their logic.

Not Being Sincerely Wrong In Your Faith Means Using the Whole Word!

- 1) We must hear the Gospel message.
 - Romans 10:17 Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.
- 2) We must believe that Jesus is Lord.
 - Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- 3) We must repent of our sins .
 - Romans 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
- 4) We must be baptized into Christ.
 - Romans 6:3-4 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
- 5) We must then walk in the newness of life.
 - Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.