

Zeal for God is Not Enough!

Romans 10:1-4

Thought for the Day. Zealous, sincere devotion to God is not sufficient to save our souls; our pursuit of righteousness (a right standing before God and right relationship with Him) must be in accordance with the teachings of His Word, the Bible.

Is there more than one way to be saved? Are there "many paths that lead to God?" Is it enough to be zealous and sincere? Is the Old Testament Law a means of salvation? Are the Jews today saved because of the Old Covenant and their obedience to the Mosaic Law? Do they need to hear and believe the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved?

According to Martin Luther, the Father of the Protestant Reformation, salvation is a free gift from God received by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ apart from works of any kind: by grace *alone* through faith *alone*. "This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification, is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all godliness." (*Underlining added for emphasis*)

Any teaching that adds any work to the salvation formula of the New Testament is a false teaching! And by the "salvation formula", I mean Ephesians 2:8-9 – "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." If we add any human work to the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross as being necessary for our salvation, then we are saying that His sacrifice is not sufficient to pay for our sins! Salvation is by God's grace, a gift received by man through faith—and that faith *manifests itself* in works of love and obedience to the Lord's teachings. But our works of love and obedience do not in any way earn salvation for us.

Martin Luther was primarily protesting the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church (that's where the word "Protestant" comes from). But his understanding of Scripture also led him to believe that the teachings and practices of Judaism were also contrary to what God had revealed in His Word, especially in the New Testament books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. (Cp. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11-12)

What does the Word of God say?

1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. (Cp. Romans 9:1-4a)

- "What will happen to the Jewish people who believe in God but not in Christ? Since they believe in the same God, won't they be saved? If that were true, Paul would not have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to teach Jews about Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is the most complete revelation of God, no one can fully know God apart from knowing Jesus; and because God appointed Jesus to bring God and human beings together, no one can come to God by another path. The Jews, like everyone else, can find salvation only through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

- The Jews were zealous for God but they had rejected the truth that God had revealed.
- It's God's game; He gets to set the rules and in order to please Him we have to play according to His rules. So being sincere in our religion, being zealous, even for the God of the Bible, is not enough! We must come to Him in accordance with the truth that He has revealed to us.

3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

- The Jews wanted to establish their own righteousness by the works of the Law. Therefore, they refused to submit to the Lord and to His means of achieving righteousness—by humbly accepting Jesus as the Messiah.
- A right standing and a right relationship with God begins with submission to Him. We do not dictate the terms of our surrender—we surrender and come on His terms! (Cp. Philippians 3:4-9)

4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

- For those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, the purpose of the Law has been fulfilled. It has brought us to Christ and now, we have all the righteousness we need to be able to enter into the presence of God.
- The righteousness of Jesus Christ is given to us and God's standard is satisfied.