

# What Is Needed to Get Into Heaven

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[0:00] Romans chapter 9 and verse 30. Romans chapter 9 and verse 30. Why not?

Because they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written, See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.

And the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

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

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. When people are saved, they want other people to be saved.

[1:39] And that's the sort of thing that we have here in Romans chapter 10 in the very first verse. We see it in the life of this man named Paul when he writes, Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Paul himself had been a very religious Israelite, and yet for all that he did in religion, he found out that he was lost under God's wrath and on his way to an eternity in hell.

He'd been mistaken about the most important thing in life, how to be saved. How to be made right with God, how to be adopted into his family and to enjoy his love and care all through this life and then through all eternity.

He had it wrong. He'd sought it all in the wrong way. And so when Paul really was saved, he became concerned to see other Israelites saved from God's wrath.

And his concern was that he saw most of them were also mistaken, as he had been, about the way to be saved.

[3:00] The very nation that had that rich history of dealings with God and had the scriptures given to them, they are the very ones where we find darkness on the issue of how to be right with God.

And on this score, our nation is not all that different from first century Israel. For though we have no shortage of Bibles and churches, there's still widespread ignorance today about how a lost sinner gets right with God.

Paul's letter to the Romans is written to expose and correct this ignorance. And nothing could be more important for us than to get this right.

Because it concerns our eternal destiny, whether we will spend all of eternity under God's curse in hell or under God's blessings in heaven.

It comes down to this issue. How is it that a sinner is made right with God? It's the most important thing for every five-year-old or 55-year-old and any age that you may be to know.

[4:19] So the pressing question this morning, what is needed to get into heaven? Now, six times in the passage that was read for us, Paul speaks of righteousness.

And that's the answer, you see. Righteousness is the qualification that God has set for entering his heaven. Now, we're familiar with this idea of entrance qualifications.

Some of you are junior and senior high schoolers, and you are or will be applying for entrance into universities and schools of higher learning, and you find that there are certain requirements that you must have met in order to be received into that school.

Certain classes that you must have passed or a certain grade point average that you must have maintained in high school or class rank or test scores.

Now, you may not like their requirements, but that doesn't change them. There they are. Those who meet them are welcomed, and those who don't aren't. So God's entrance qualification for heaven is

righteousness.

[5 : 40] Righteousness, a record of being right with God. He looks at his law books, and then he looks at the person, and he says, this person is right with my law.

My law has nothing to condemn in him. He's right with me. He's right in my sight. He's righteous. Well, then the question follows, how righteous do you have to be to get into heaven?

Just how righteous? And the answer is just as righteous as God himself. God is light, and in him there is no darkness.

No, none at all. He cannot dwell with darkness, with sin. So that's the first thing we need to see this morning. The righteousness required for heaven is a perfect righteousness, a spotless, flawless righteousness, without defect, without deficiency.

It's the report card of straight A's, all 100%. Some of you would be happy to have 99%, but that's not the requirement for heaven.

[6 : 58] It's 100% righteousness, even as God is righteous. Now, I am sure that most people today are ignorant of this requirement to get into heaven.

But the Bible couldn't be clearer on this matter. Galatians 3.10 says, all who rely on observing the law are under a curse because it's written, cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law.

If you don't continue to do everything written in the law, you're cursed. So if I do most of the things found in God's law and I obey most of His commands and don't break any of the big commands, isn't that enough?

No, cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the law. But if I do everything written most of the time and only slip occasionally, won't that be enough?

No, cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the law. You see, the righteousness required for entrance into heaven is obedience to all the commands of God all the time.

[8 : 22] And that's why all who rely on observing the law are under a curse because nobody obeys perfectly all the time.

Just take the two greatest commands. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. Do you love God that way all the time?

And the second is like to it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Have you ever loved your neighbor that way?

And so what we see when we come to this question of how righteous you have to be to enter into heaven? Well, we realize that his law makes demands not just of our outward behavior but even upon our heart and what we love and what we hate and what we desire and our motivations our thoughts.

And before this standard we see that we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God and all of our shortcomings of the law whether we miss by a lot or a little that shortcoming that coming short is sin and it disqualifies us from entrance into God's heaven.

[9 : 48] So how many broken laws does it take to make you a lawbreaker in God's sight? James 2.10 says whoever keeps the whole law and yet offends at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

that the commands of God are such that they stand or fall together and you may keep nine of the ten commandments but if you break one of them you're guilty of breaking them all.

It's like you were suspended over some cliff and all that's holding you up from splitting your head on the rocks below is a chain with ten links.

How many of those links do you need to break before the chain is broken? You see to break one of them is to be guilty of breaking all of them in God's sight.

Consider Adam and Eve. As long as they were perfectly obedient to God's commands they would be able to enjoy eternal life.

[10 : 56] How many sins did they have to commit to forfeit eternal life? Just one. Just eating from the fruit that God said you shall not eat.

And they ate. And they lacked that perfect righteousness that's required for eternal life. So they were driven out of paradise and angelic beings with flashing swords were posted to keep them from coming back into the garden and back into that place of blessing.

And we realize then that perfect righteousness really is the requirement for heaven. That God really is just that serious about this matter. how righteous do you need to be?

Perfectly righteous. You see then the biggest problem we all have in life that makes all of our other problems really small is that we don't have the very thing required to enter into heaven to be right with God forever.

perfect obedience was the way for sinless men to continue to enjoy eternal life but it's no way of salvation for sinners.

[12 : 29] It only takes one sin to forever close this way of enjoying God's heaven and we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the Bible speaks of another way another way that this requirement of perfect righteousness can be met not by our own obedience which is so flawed but by the obedience of another that is perfect and this brings us to the second point we've looked at the righteousness required for heaven now we look at the righteousness provided by Jesus Christ.

And let me say right up front God didn't owe us another way to heaven once we had forfeited our right by sin. He didn't owe us another way.

Did you know that when angels sinned God didn't provide a way for them to recover righteousness He just reserved health for them.

But in amazing grace God has provided a way to recover sinful men so that they might have a perfect righteousness by which to enter heaven.

in sheer grace God the Father sent His own eternal Son and He became a man and was born under the law and was obedient to that law in every point even to the point of being obedient to death even death on a cross so great was His obedience to the law flawless He continued to do everything written in the law never once deviating never once coming short of it and by that obedience Jesus Christ worked out a perfect record 100% straight A report card indeed He's called the righteous one because He's the only one with this perfect righteousness tempted in every way just as we are yet without sin the righteous one and this righteousness is called in Romans 5 17 the gift of righteousness because it's not something we earn by our own obedience but rather it's something

[14 : 58] God gives to every hell deserving sinner who trusts in Christ for it for justice through the disobedience of the one man Adam the many were made sinners so also through the obedience of the one man Jesus the many will be made righteous it's through His obedience that many are made righteous before God and that's the righteousness that Paul's talking about here the righteousness that comes from God He is the originator of it it's His righteousness it's His doing and He gives it as gift to those who believe on His Son so what do we have we have the law giver Jesus Christ becoming the law keeper in order that He might give righteousness to law breakers like you and me the law giver becoming the law keeper to give righteousness to us law breakers the righteousness of God how does it come to us

Paul says in chapter 3 verse 22 the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all that believe it doesn't come to you through your obeying can't come that way we've already blown it but rather by believing on Christ who has perfectly kept it so it's through faith faith in Jesus Christ is the empty hands held out to receive this gift of righteousness that's all it is that's all faith it receives and all the merits of Christ perfect obedience are imputed to your account when you believe his report card of straight A's is put over to your report card and all those F's that you had were put over to his report card and he bore your sins and failures to the cross and was damned there and took your curse that you deserve for sin that you might have the blessings that he deserved by his perfect obedience for Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us as it is written cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree so every believer can say with that woman who had engraved on her tombstone in Ireland

I gave him my sin and he gave me his righteousness the great exchange of faith for God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that through him we might become the righteousness of God so that the righteousness required for heaven is met by the righteousness provided in Jesus Christ to all who believe Christ is indeed the end of the law so that there might be righteousness for everyone who believes did you get that everyone whether he be Jew or Gentile five or fifty five whatever the difference is he who believes in Jesus has the gift of righteousness well these are the garments of salvation that he dresses his people in the robe of righteousness and that righteousness covers all my sins and qualifies me for entrance into heaven

Christ takes the curse my sins deserve and I get the blessings his perfect obedience deserves and that's why believers in Jesus are the humblest people on the planet because they know that they have eternal life strictly because of the righteousness of another they cannot look down their noses at any other human being because they themselves are sinners who needed a savior to obey where they disobeyed and they have received the free gift of righteousness they're humble people and it's also why believers in Jesus are the happiest people on the planet they're right with God that means that as God looks at their record he sees them as as righteous as Jesus is righteous because it's his righteousness that he sees and so they're made right with God they're ready to live they're ready to die they're ready for the judgment and so they rejoice in the Lord and glory in Jesus Christ and put no confidence in the flesh I wonder if we understand how good the good news is that the very righteousness required for entrance into heaven is provided by Jesus Christ himself for unrighteous people now with such a sweet deal we might expect everyone to be flocking to Jesus Christ to receive this righteousness and why are there empty seats here this morning why is not everyone in Bremen and indeed in the whole world saying I want to learn about this I want to get in on this deal that the requirement for entrance into heaven is provided by another on my behalf and yet what we see is that people are not flocking to Christ to get that righteousness why is that it wasn't happening in

[20:58] Paul's day and it's not happening in our day and it's for the very same reasons Paul explains some of those reasons in verse 3 of Romans 10 three problems that men have concerning this righteousness that comes from God and it's the same three problems people have today first man's ignorance second man's futile attempts and thirdly man's rebellion first of all man's ignorance of God's righteousness notice verses 3 and the beginning of 4 Paul says for I can testify about them that's Israelites that they are zealous for God but their zeal is not based on knowledge since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God do you see what Paul's saying of his people the Israelites as a whole he's saying they were ignorant they were lacking right knowledge of the most important thing of all they didn't know the righteousness that comes from God now you can be ignorant about many things and not be the worse off because of it you may be ignorant of

Buster Posey's batting average during the world series and not suffer for it you may be ignorant of the speed of light or how to make pancakes from scratch or the size engine in your car and never suffer for the lack of that knowledge but if you are ignorant about God's righteousness you will suffer eternally this is an ignorance you cannot survive a fatal ignorance of eternal consequence a culpable ignorance of which you are guilty indeed Israel was guilty they should have known they had the very words of God that told them the way of salvation was through the righteousness of their Messiah and indeed it's true today we have

Bibles galore people aren't interested in this righteousness they're not interested they have no interest to seek it out or to lay hold of it and so this ignorance still prevails I wonder if we realize just how ignorant our world is of the most important question how can I a sinner be right with God I should suppose that one out of scarcely one out of ten worshippers in church today in our country are not ignorant about this righteousness they're in church they may have done many things but they do not understand even as Israel did not understand as Paul who immersed himself in the scriptures did not understand who came to see that I read with a veil over my heart

I was blinded I could not see even as I read the scriptures that the only righteousness that can make a man right with God is God's righteousness now some wrongly think it's partly their own righteousness plus the righteousness of Christ as if he simply makes up the difference as if something of their own is there to contribute an Amish man was told you know that all these rules that you keep won't do anything to get you into heaven and he said in response don't you think that they'll do just a little good don't you think they'll help just a little bit fatal unbelief as if Christ's righteousness is not enough and needs a little bit of mind to make up the difference to have enough righteousness to get into heaven no it's all of grace where there is no salvation it's all of Jesus works and none of ours by which were justified it's not by works of righteousness which we have done Paul says why do you suppose that is that that the writers of scripture must keep saying it's not by works less man should boast it's not by works of righteousness don't be deceived well it's because that there is this propensity in man to believe that it is by our works even when we have Bible verses that tell us point blank it's not and so the ignorance is found even in nations where there are the most Bibles this ignorance is ignorance of the righteousness required to get into heaven we think it's not much just be a good person it's ignorance of the righteousness provided by

Jesus Christ but it's also ignorance of the way it becomes mine it's through faith alone in [26:24] Christ men can say the verse whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life I believe in Jesus but they may be ignorant of what it really means to believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness well that's the first problem Paul says it's this ignorance and it leads to the second problem and that's man's futile attempts to establish his own righteousness verse 3 says since they did not know there's their ignorance they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own when men don't know about God's righteousness provided in Jesus Christ they tried to set up their own righteousness and Paul says this was true of his own countrymen the Jews he says they exerted a lot of effort they had great zeal in this matter of seeking righteousness they worked very hard to get right with God but they went about it all in the wrong way that's his claim by their own works at law keeping instead of by faith in

Christ and so they had zeal without knowledge verse 2 ends lots of effort in running but they were running on the wrong road they were running on a dead end road would never attain perfect righteousness oh but they were running hard but it's the wrong road Augustine said better to limp in the right way than to run in the wrong way they were running but it was on the wrong road no one ever got right with God by their own works and in the years before the protestant reformation in Europe back in the 16th century the masses!

were ignorant of this righteousness of God they were told that by the sacraments of the church they would be made righteous or that by their own good deeds they could be made righteous or by buying indulgences that they could purchase some of the extra credit righteousness of the saints in that treasury of merit and put that to their account so that they might have enough righteousness in the end to reach heaven they were ignorant of the perfect righteousness of God provided in Jesus Christ to all who believe and so they tried to establish their own righteousness in all these different ways and that's ever the sinner's natural reaction when he learns that he needs righteousness to get into heaven God is righteous I need righteousness to get into heaven well then let me start to clean up my life a bit let me stop saying

God's name in vain let me start going to church and let me start turning over a new leaf and I'll get some righteousness that's the natural way it's the way of Roman Catholics of Protestants of Amish of you and me it's our natural tendency to pursue righteousness by our own endeavors but it's the wrong road and so today some people are in church and they're there because they're attempting to establish their own righteousness before God and some people get baptized for that reason and others give money to the church and some read their Bibles and pray and obey many of God's commandments all in the hope that it will contribute something to their righteousness so that they might get into heaven in the end that is more common than we may know it's running hard but on the wrong road in fact every step taken in this road is a step further away from heaven not closer did you know that every act that you do in order to make yourself right with

God is a step further away from heaven not closer! because you are adding to all your other sins this proud self righteousness that would present something of your own foul doing to a thrice holy God and expect him to forgive you because of it they're futile attempts at establishing a righteousness that will satisfy God you see you come into the batter's box with three strikes already against you so no amount of swinging will do you any good now you've already sinned you've already blown it you can't produce a perfect righteousness your record in heaven is already tarnished you're already condemned already cursed because of your sin you see such efforts to establish righteousness before

[31:45] God only proves that you're ignorant of the righteousness that God requires perfect righteousness or you wouldn't be trying to establish your own and it shows that you're ignorant of the righteousness that God provides in Jesus that you could have it as a free gift if you knew that you should not continually try to set up your own righteousness wonder if you've ever dressed in the dark maybe in the closet and you're not going to wake up your husband or your wife and so you dress in the dark only to find out later in the light what a mess you are that you got your shirt started wrong the button in the hole was one off and now you see it's not lined up right and it doesn't look good in the light and you got some of breakfast on your face and your hair's a mess but you looked very respectable in your dark closet it's the same with men's self-righteousness in which they trust it appears so respectable to them but then that's because they're in the dark they're in the dark they're in the dark about what

God requires for heaven and they're in the dark as to the perfect righteousness of Jesus they're in the dark as to their own righteousness and so in the darkness what do they do they compare themselves with other people I'm not as bad as he is I'm certainly not like she is and it makes them feel respectable I've got some righteousness about me my morals are higher than hers and so on but it's all in the dark bring that woman that man into the light of the judgment in the light of God's presence and the light of the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ and it withers at once and it appears to be what it really is as Isaiah says that all of our righteousnesses are but filthy rags it's garbage to be hauled out to the end of the street to the end of the driveway and haul it away it's filthy it's not fit for man nor

God that's what we see in the light that all our righteousness as Augustine says are splendid sins oh they're so great they're they're just great sins it's only in the darkness of ignorance that men could try to set up their own righteousness as something that God should be pleased with so we've seen man's ignorance man's futile attempts to establish his own righteousness and thirdly we see man's rebellion in refusing to submit to God's way of righteousness notice again in verse 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 notice God's way of righteousness is something that we are to submit to that's unusual language in this context isn't that we need to submit to this way of righteousness well as long as you're trying to set up your own righteousness before God you're not submitting to God's way you're rebelling against God's way of salvation why is that why in the world would men refuse to submit to God's righteousness don't you find this a bit strange it's like a terminally ill patient refusing to submit to the medicine that would heal him or like the starving man refusing to submit to the food that would revive him like the condemned criminal refusing to submit to the pardon that would set him free like the bankrupt man refusing to submit to the million dollars that would enrich him so when God himself provides perfect righteousness that he himself requires why is it that men would not submit to it and live forever because he's too proud human nature is too proud to beg too proud to receive righteousness as a completely free gift totally undeserved too proud to admit that they are so bad off morally that they have nothing zero to contribute to the righteousness that will give them entrance into heaven that's just too that's going too far surely there's some contribution of righteousness that I can make and that fatal pride keeps them pursuing a righteousness with

God in the wrong way keeps them from receiving the only righteousness that there is in Christ for verse four says Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes so how do you receive this righteousness well the first step in receiving the righteousness that comes from God is to renounce all your efforts at righteousness it's to empty your hands of any claims to righteousness I thought this was something that God should be pleased with I did this I did that I didn't do that and what I've got to do is first empty my hands of all of that claim to establish my own righteousness then I have empty hands because that's what faith is faith is the empty hands held out to receive God's free gift of righteousness in Jesus but as long as

[37 : 50] I'm hanging on to something that I do to make myself right with God I don't have empty hands I don't have saving faith I don't have that faith to embrace Jesus along so I got first to repudiate anything of my own doing as ever being something that I would show up in heaven before God and say God on the basis of what I've done show me favor no I repudiate that I come with nothing good to say for myself nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I claim that's saving faith that's how we receive this righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ and that's the very righteousness that the Jews refused to submit to it's why Israel did attain a right standing with

God even though they pursued it and ran hard after it why not he tells us at the end of chapter 9 because they pursued! it not by faith but as if it were by works and so they stumbled over the stumbling stone what was that that was Christ the righteous one they would not come for righteousness to Jesus Christ alone and so they stumbled over him though he lived among them though he was the fulfillment of their Old Testament prophecies yet they stumbled over him because they would have righteousness by their own deeds!

rather than to come humbly and to accept it all from a Savior Jesus Christ and that's the great tragedy the great mistake that many are making today so what about you my friend what about you where are you in this whole business do you have the perfect righteousness needed for entrance into heaven God has provided this righteousness in his son Jesus Christ who perfectly kept every commandment even unto obedience to death and so he has the righteous record to give to every

believing sinner perfect righteousness he's willing to give it to you he'll give it to you this morning if you will repudiate your own righteousness and come with the empty hands of faith and receive it from him as a free gift he'll give it to you a righteousness that will at once make you right with God and every day of your life you will live it under this favor of God and all eternity as well you know you're commanded to come to Christ for this righteousness it's not just that it's out there and God says well if you want righteousness go come to Christ no he commands you to believe he commands you to come to his son for righteousness don't do God the affront of treating his son that he sent to the cross to be damned in the place of sinners that he sent this Christ to perfectly obey don't don't despise this way of salvation he commands you to submit to this way of righteousness immediately right now you must submit to it so whatever your reason for not coming to Christ for righteousness you need to see it as rebellion and submit it once to the righteousness of God in Christ fall at his feet and receive the kiss of pardon and of perfect righteousness from Jesus Christ you know you're not prepared to live unless you're prepared to die is fair enough you're not prepared to live unless you're prepared to die and you're not prepared to die unless you're prepared to stand before the judge of all mankind and you're not prepared to stand before the judge unless you have perfect righteousness put on your record book Do you have it?

[42:25] You are a breath away from that appointment. It's appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment. You're just one glance down at that text that's coming in that causes that car to veer over into your lane, and immediately you are in the presence of the judge, and the one thing needful is their perfect righteousness.

In Christ. Don't delay on such an eternal matter. Submit to his righteousness and live.

Many here have done that. Many here have come to Christ. Not one of us has been pushed away. And so we know the joy of sins forgiven, home in heaven, favor of God for time and eternity.

He offers it to you, whoever you are, to all who believe on Christ. We're going to sing of that. And as we do, if you've never trusted in the Savior alone to save you, put your trust in him.

Number 441. If this Savior is your trust, then let's glory in Jesus Christ, and put no confidence in the flesh, but rejoice in him.

[43:43] 441. 441. We get to sing this song directly to the one who obeyed perfectly for us. Let's stand and sing it. 441.

Oh, Father in heaven, not a one of us here but once walked in darkness and in the ignorance about this righteousness of God.

And so many of us must stand humbled and yet happy and thank you for having opened our eyes to show us what it was that was required, was not just trying our best, not just trying to be a good neighbor, not doing a few things better than others, but that you showed us your holiness and your holy requirement of perfect obedience.

And all the air went out of us and we had no strength of our own then to go on. And how we thank you that you didn't leave us in despair, but you revealed to us a Savior who provided such a righteousness for everyone that believes.

And then you drew us to faith in that Savior. Savior, and we've received that righteous standing with God. And so we rejoice today.

[45:06] Lord, would you work in us what you worked in Paul of old, that we might have a great desire and prayer in our hearts for others now to be saved as well, to cast away all trust in self, and to put all hope in what Christ has done for sinners in his great obedience and death, and do it for your praise and send us forth rejoicing in this gospel.

We ask in Jesus' name, amen.