

The Roman Road

Often, I find a tract in a public place that encourages one to “follow the Roman Road” to salvation. The gist of all such tracts is that the Book of Romans teaches that justification is by grace alone through faith alone. These tracts are a good example of building a doctrine on the fallacy of a partial truth.

The plan of salvation can certainly be taught from the book of Romans. However, the “Roman Road” is longer than what is usually presented in these tracts. When all the facts are considered no one can properly conclude that salvation is by faith alone apart from obedience to the Gospel.

The Roman Road (Route 15)

Romans 1:5 Paul was appointed to be an apostle “for,” “unto,” or “in order to” the obedience of faith (“*obedience to the faith*” in the KJV). The aim or end of his preaching was the obedience of the Gentiles to the things he preached (cf. 1:14-15). The very epistle which is supposed to teach salvation by faith alone apart from obedience begins with a declaration of the necessity of obedience to the faith or the Gospel (cf. 1:16).

Romans 16:25-26 Paul ends the letter just as he began it affirming that God’s eternal plan of salvation, the Gospel, has as its object and desired end the obedience of faith. Whatever one says about salvation by faith cannot exclude this truth.

Romans 1:16-17 What Paul called “*the faith*” in verse 5, he now calls “*the Gospel*.” This Gospel is “*the power of God unto salvation*.” There is no other power revealed. It alone effects justification by faith. This is what Paul preached and this is what men were to obey.

Romans 10:8-17 What does it mean to “*call on the name of the Lord to be saved*”? Most believe it means “pray the sinner’s prayer” or “ask Jesus to come into your heart by faith.” However, that is not what Paul says that it means. The process of calling on the name of the Lord involves (1) the word of faith, (2) hearing the word, (3) believing the word and (4) obeying the word. Paul specifically identifies one aspect of that obedience, the good confession. If “the only condition is that we believe on Him and what He has done for us,” then why does Paul say, “*If thou shalt confess*”? Isn’t making the good confession obedience? Can one be saved and not confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33)?

Romans 4:1-5 Abraham is the archetype of one who has called upon the name of the Lord to be saved. He was a sinner (Genesis 12:13; 16:1-4; 20:2; 26:7), but his faith was reckoned for righteousness. He was obedient, but he was not justified by works as a matter of debt (Galatians 3:10-12). Rather, he was justified by faith as a matter of grace (Genesis 15:6). His obedience did not nullify God’s grace (Hebrews 11:8-10; James 2:21-24).

Romans 4:22-5:1 All are justified by faith as Abraham was. Yet, it is evident it was not by faith alone without obedience. If our faith is as his was, we will be righteous as he was. We now know what kind of faith justifies. It is not faith alone, but faith which worketh by love; faith that obeys the Gospel (Galatians 5:6; 2Thessalonians 1:6-10; James 2:24).

Romans 3:23-28 Sin is a universal problem (cf. 3:9). [It may be necessary to note for your student that while all men sin all men are not born sinners, neither do they have to sin. A review of the context will bear out that he does not have infants in view and that sin is a choice (cf. 3:10-18; 7:9)]. Nevertheless, all accountable human beings stand in need of the remission of sins. It is the Gospel that addresses this universal need of mankind. The central element in the Gospel plan is the death of Jesus. By dying on the cross Jesus became the propitiation for our sins (“a conciliatory sacrifice”) which appeases God’s just wrath toward sinners (1John 2:2; Matthew 20:28; 26:28; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1Timothy 2:5-6). We obtain this redemption “in Christ,” that is, through a relationship with Christ (Romans 8:1; 12:5; 2Corinthians 5:17). The question is how do we enter into Christ? Upon what condition or conditions does God pardon man’s sins? Martin Luther in his translation of v. 28 inserted the word “only” after the word “faith.” This is how most folks have heard it preached, and this is what they believe about: “a man is justified by faith only.” However, that is not what the text says. The obedience of faith is not excluded; it is the “works of the Law of Moses” which are excluded. God does not require sinless perfection as the grounds of justification, but He does require the obedience of faith.

Romans 6:3-4 How does one enter into Christ? The penitent believer is “baptized into Christ.” This is when and where the old man is crucified, and the new man is raised to walk in newness of life. Many want to make this a symbol of what has already occurred “at faith;” however, the language does not allow such a view. Paul says they were dead, they became dead when they were baptized into death and we were raised up to walk in newness of life. If the spiritually alive man was crucified with Christ, what was raised up in the likeness of His resurrection?

Romans 6:16-18 Obedience is “unto righteousness,” that is, it is the end or goal obtained. Likewise, sin produces death. This righteousness or justification occurred when we obeyed the Gospel from the heart (Acts 15:7-11; 1Peter 1:18-23). This is the obedience of faith (cf. Romans 1:5,16-17).

Romans 2:4-10 Will you repent and obey the truth? The hope of heaven is sure only to those who work good, obey the truth, and call upon the name of the Lord.

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