

How to Submit to the Righteousness of God

by John Piper

The sermon emphasizes the importance of submitting to God's righteousness, which is received through faith in Jesus Christ, and teaches mothers to model this submission to their children.

Duration: 40:43

Scripture: Romans 10:1

Topics: "Salvation Prayer", "Gods Righteousness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of praying for our children, especially those who are unbelievers. He encourages mothers not to grow weary or let go, but to continue praying for their children's salvation. The speaker explains that the Gospel is the power of salvation for everyone who believes, and urges believers to share it often. The sermon also highlights the significance of Jesus' sacrifice and how it manifests God's righteousness, emphasizing the need to submit to Him for salvation.

Transcript

The scripture text for this morning is taken from Romans chapter 10 verses 1 through 4. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Let's pray together. Father, my heart's desire and prayer to you is that every mother and every father and every single person, every married person without children, every widow, every widower would both understand and experience the glorious event of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of the righteousness of Christ alone, for your glory alone.

Let none, I pray, leave Northwestern College or this sanctuary without tasting and experiencing what it is by grace, through faith, to be set right with God. So come and help me take this text and open it faithfully, I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's put Romans 10, 1 to 4, under the banner of motherhood. Every text in the Bible is a Mother's Day text. If you believe that all scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness, and you believe that correction and reproof and instruction in righteousness are necessary for the weighty calling of motherhood.

If you don't believe those two things, you won't agree that every text is a mother's text, but if you do, you will. And therefore, it's not hard at all to take this text and put it under the banner of motherhood. However, there's an even more specific reason why this text works as a Mother's Day text, and the reason is found in another text.

I'm going to invite you to go there. So if you have a Bible and you would like to put your finger at Romans 10, go with me back a few books, or forward a few books to 2 Timothy chapter 3. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 14, where Paul says to Timothy, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it. They'll stop there and answer the question, who is that? Hold fast to what you have firmly believed, and the reason, one of the reasons why you should hold it fast is because you know from whom you learned it.

Now, to find out who that is, let's go back to chapter 1, verse 5 of 2 Timothy. It was his mother and his grandmother, Eunice and Lois. Here's what he says.

Paul says, I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well. We learned from Acts 14, his father was an unbelieving Greek. His mother and his grandmother were devout Jewish women, and they taught him the faith through the Old Testament scriptures long before they ever heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, let's go back to 2 Timothy 3, verses 14 and 15, and notice the link with Romans 10. Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, namely your godly mother and grandmother, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, that's the Old Testament, with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. What makes this text so relevant to our text in Romans 10 is not just the connection with motherhood and how the mother and the grandmother built faith into the life of Timothy.

What makes it so relevant is these last few words in verse 15, through faith in Christ. Notice how Paul connects the Old Testament scriptures and what they taught and how they were taught to Timothy by his mother and grandmother with faith in Jesus Christ. Read it again and notice it.

Verse 15, from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation. How does the Old Testament make us wise for salvation? Through faith in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament guides you wisely to salvation if and only if it guides you to Jesus.

That is incredibly relevant for this morning's text because it didn't happen to the Jews that Paul's talking about in this Romans text. Even though we can never blame mom and dad completely for the unbelief of their children, since God himself has children who are often acting out of character with his standards and who often struggle with unbelief, nevertheless we should ask, were the Jewish mothers and grandmothers and fathers teaching their children in Paul's day God's law the way Eunice and Lois were? Why did so many stumble over the stumbling stone, Jesus Christ, instead of seeing him as the goal and the fulfillment of the law when Timothy embraced him as soon as he heard him? Because Paul says, you have known the scriptures which make you wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ. Were they not doing that? It says Christ Jesus, through Christ Jesus.

The scriptures make you wise unto salvation through Christos Yesus, Greek, or Mashiach Yeshua, Hebrew, or Christ Jesus, English. Messiah, Savior. The whole Old Testament is written to say, a Messiah is coming, a Savior is coming, a Joshua, a second Joshua is coming, a second Adam is coming, a prophet

is coming, unlike Moses.

But like Moses, it's all written to say he's coming. And mothers were appointed, make that plain to these little Jewish boys and girls so that they won't stumble over the stumbling stone. And you wonder, what happened? To make it more pointed, mothers, all those of you charged with the younger ones at Bethlehem, fathers, teachers, are we teaching the Old Testament and the New Testament to make our children wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ and faith in him, or are we turning the scriptures into a little collection of morality plays? Do the stories of the Bible point again and again to the need for a Savior in your teaching your children, or do they point to the children's need to get their act together morally? Are the children getting the impression under our teaching, are the children getting the impression that Christianity is mainly a list of do's and don'ts, or mainly a story about how God justifies the ungodly? By grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of the blood and righteousness of Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

What's the impression the children are picking up as we teach them? Are they getting the impression that the foundation of their acceptance with God is their good behavior, or is the foundation the perfect behavior and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ received by faith alone? Are they learning to win God's favor by a righteousness they perform, or by a perfect righteousness performed on their behalf by Jesus Christ? Moms, how are we doing in getting our children ready to be wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ, through faith in Jesus Christ? Or let's be more complete in the way we ask the question. Let's draw in the issue of the obedience called sanctification which God requires of believers. Let's draw that into the question and ask it like this.

Are the children learning from us that the practical, personal obedience that God requires of believers is the way to become a justified person, or the way a justified person becomes? I'll ask that one again. Are the children learning by the way we instruct them and teach them from the Scriptures that the obedience God requires of believers is the way to become a justified person, or the way a justified person becomes? When you tell a child to do something and insist on obedience, which you should at cost of spanking, are you leading the child to think his good behavior is the root that grows into justification, or the fruit that flows from justification? This is a high caller, moms. You must be a theologian to be a mother.

You must make some very clear distinctions. You must know how a person is saved. You must know the difference between sanctification and justification and faith alone and the enabling power of God to obey.

Are we helping the children see saving faith both as the way that we have Christ's righteousness as the basis of our acceptance and as the way we have Christ's power to become like him? Are we keeping both of these together in the right order? Faith in Christ, first to have his perfection and his pardon imputed to us by grace through faith, and second, to have his purifying power. One for justification, perfection and pardon. One for sanctification, purifying power.

And both received by the same faith in union with Jesus Christ, and not merged or fused as though they were the same thing. Justification and sanctification. We must teach our children how to get right with God, clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus before and as a foundation of all their obedience, which can then please God.

And otherwise, it's pure legalism. That's a high calling. That's a high calling.

Lois and Eunice taught the Scriptures to Timothy so faithfully that when he heard the gospel preached by the Apostle Paul, he knew it was true. And he embraced Christ as the fulfillment of everything his mother had taught him. And he was saved through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now, let's go to Romans 10, 1 to 4, and see the broken- hearted Paul praying and teaching. Teach with a broken heart, Mom. Here's what he says.

Brothers, my heart's desire. I've said a lot of things about election in the last chapter, he says. I've said a lot of tough, weighty, perplexing, difficult, awesome things.

Now, hear my heart, he says. My heart's desire and prayer to God for them, that is, these Jews who are not seeing it. My prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

They're not saved. It didn't happen for them like it did for Timothy. Why? Verse 2, I bear them witness.

They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Now, that's a sad thing, folks. That's really sad.

Do you know, you can have a zeal for God and be lost, not be saved, because the zeal may not accord with knowledge. It's not based on right knowing. So he's praying for his friends, his family, that it would happen to them what happened to Timothy, that they wouldn't stumble over the stumbling stone, Jesus, and that they would believe in him and see him.

What were they ignorant of? What didn't they know? What's wrong with their zeal? He explains in verses 3 and 4. For being ignorant, here's what they're ignorant of, being ignorant of the righteousness of faith, or the righteousness that comes from faith, from God, I'm sorry, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, or the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking instead to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, or the goal of the law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes. So what are they ignorant of? How did they miss it so badly? They're ignorant as they try to establish their own righteousness and don't submit to God's. They're ignorant that submitting to God's righteousness is first and foremost trusting Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Submitting to God's righteousness is trusting Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes. Now, I can hear an objection raised by Paul's zealous kinsmen to this effect. Paul, Piper, you do us entirely wrong.

It is precisely our effort to establish righteousness in our lives which is our submission to God's righteousness. What, pray tell, would submission to righteousness be if it isn't our endeavor to come under God's sovereign commands and work it out in our lives? What more do you want from us? That's what it means to be righteous. We're even seeking God's help in this.

We pray, I thank you Father that I am not like one of these publicans. I thank you for helping me be this way. We're even seeking God's help in this.

What more submission do you want than seeking your help and doing your commands? And you tell us we're insubordinate, that we're not submitting to the righteousness of God. Paul says, when you live that way, when you try to labor to keep the commandments as a way to be justified before God, even seeking God's help in the doing of it, you're not submitting to my righteousness. Why? It feels very submissive.

It sure feels submissive. I'm looking at somebody else's dictates, not my own. I'm trying to conform my life to those dictates in order that I might stand right before you.

It sure feels submissive. And he says, no, you are not submitting to my righteousness. Why? Now, the answer is given in Romans 3.21, Philippians 3.8 and 9, and Romans 10.4. Let me read you.

You don't need to look these up. I'll just read them to you and you'll see it at Romans 10.4, but I want you to hear the similarity. It's the same answer.

The answer is this, with the sending of my Son into the world, a great and glorious thing has happened. I have manifested my righteousness for you in a way never manifested before. To submit to me now is to submit to the one who provides for you my righteousness.

If you do not submit to him, you do not submit to me. Let's read it. This is Romans 3.21. Now, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Now, Philippians chapter 3, verse 8. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I might gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. And now, Romans 10.4. For the goal of the law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes.

That's the reason given in verse 4 for why they were insubordinate and were not submitting to God's righteousness, even though they were saying, I sure am trying to be righteous according to the commandments of God. I'm trying. And Paul says, you're just missing it.

You're missing what Timothy saw because his mother was so faithful to point to a Savior, a Savior, a Savior, a Savior, a Savior. It's all about a Savior, not about you and your performances. And he got it.

And then when the gospel was preached, it says the Old Testament made him wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ. The reason it is not submission to God's righteousness when we seek justification by trying to obey God, even with God's help, is that it dishonors Christ as our righteousness. It dishonors Christ as our righteousness.

I don't care how much progress you make in external conformity to the law, if you aren't looking away from yourself to a perfect righteousness provided by the Son of God, you are dishonoring the Christ who was given precisely to be your righteousness. You are robbing from him for yourself. You are saying, now God, I will seek your help and then I will keep your commandments and in that way I will commend myself as worthy of being counted right because I've sought your grace, I have performed your commandments, and now in that dynamic, count me righteous for that reason, while God is saying it will never ever happen that way, for that will not glorify my Son, both as power giver and as perfection giver.

Let's not merge these two and cut Christ's righteousness in half or his honor in half. Perfect divine righteousness performed by the Son of God is the only righteousness that will justify in the court of God. You shall obey him through faith, but your imperfect obedience of faith will never suffice.

It will always be the fruit of your justification, not the root of it, if it pleases God. Submission to God's righteousness that God requires of us is not simply trusting in Christ's enabling power as the key to sanctification. It is also submission and trust in Christ's perfection and pardon as the key to justification.

If we try to merge them, we will cut the honor of our Lord in half. Now, mothers, what shall we do? Fathers, all of us, what shall we do? I close with four applications, four implications for our lives and especially the lives of mothers who are charged with fathers. And if you're a single mom, you bear an unusual charge.

If you're married, your husband bears the main responsibility and you share it immensely. So what implications are there? Number one, mothers, get right with God through faith in Jesus Christ as your righteousness. Mothers, get right with God through faith alone in Jesus Christ as your only hope for a perfect, sweet, standing before an all-holy God.

Get it yourself first. Settle it, women. Once and for all, you will never measure up to God's standards, ever.

Therefore, receive the free gift of righteousness wrought for you by the only one who could ever work it, Jesus Christ, to be received by a motherly faith alone as an alien imputation to you that you never performed, never could perform. And then rest, mom. Rest and let the faith by which you receive the perfection of Jesus imputed to you, clothing you in all your imperfection, let the faith by which you receive this imputed righteousness become, be the savoring of Jesus Christ to such a degree that it shivers the roots of sin in your life, the addictions, the anger, the resentment, the regrets.

Let your faith in him as your all-righteous provision become such a treasure to you, savoring him as power and pardon, power and perfection, that that new treasure, that new all-satisfying food and drink shivers the root of sin in your life. Keep these distinct but not separate. Know that you are loved, accepted, and justified through faith alone, by grace alone, on the righteousness of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone.

Know that. Rest in that. Fight the fight of faith as a justified mother, not to become a justified mother.

And you know what? The children will see the difference. They'll see the difference where their mom is nervous and insecure and desperately trying to measure up to God's standards, which she never can. They'll see that.

It'll make them dysfunctional, and you'll pass it to the next generation. And this morning, God can break that, and you can go out the freest of all women. That's number one.

Settle it for yourself. Number two, teach the children to look to Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins and for the righteousness they need. Over and over and over and over again, send them to Jesus.

Send them to Jesus. Not to yourself. Not to their moral resolves.

Send them to Jesus over and over again. He's your only hope. He's your only righteousness.

He's your only forgiveness. He's your only acceptance. If there's one thing the children learn, and our families may they learn, Christ is our only hope.

He's our only hope. Because I disobey mom and dad, if not outwardly, inwardly way too often, and I'm really scared to hell, and I don't know what to do. But mama showed me Christ is my only hope.

Make that third. Teach them that trusting Christ as the King of righteousness not only brings them a right standing with God, but also provides for them a treasure, a joy that enables them to sever the power and the root of sin in their life. Help them see how these two things happen when they connect with Jesus by faith.

Help them see this. You can draw it for them. Faith connects you with Jesus.

In Jesus there is perfection and there is pardon. That means he forgives all these bad things and he supplies you with the righteousness God requires so that you can be accepted even as an imperfect little boy or girl and help them to see that when you connect in this Jesus there is a treasure and there is a power and there is a river of love that flows to you that will make you so happy you don't need to sin to be happy. Help them see the difference and help them see how they both go together.

A sentence you will not say to your seven-year-old is, so a progressive personal righteousness is the necessary fruit of a perfect imputed righteousness. Not because it's a false sentence but because it's unintelligible. I'll say it again so that moms can get it and then I'll try to translate for a seven-year-old.

So, progressive personal righteousness, real acted-out Christ-likeness, progressive personal righteousness is the necessary fruit of perfect imputed righteousness. Not the other way around. Okay, you're telling me I'm supposed to teach this to my child.

Translate. So, here's my effort. I have one of these.

I would say, Talitha, mommy and daddy have lived for a long time and we have learned from the Bible and from our lives that we and you will never be good enough to meet God's demands and standards. Your mommy and your daddy still make many mistakes and sin and you know you do too. That's why the Bible says God gave us his son Jesus to die for our sins and to be our righteousness.

You can pause there to explain that word if they don't know what that is. If we trust him, we have to trust him. That's all.

So, Talitha, always look to Jesus, always trust Jesus and remember, since God didn't spare his own son but gave him for us all, he will surely give us all things with him so that when he died he not only provided forgiveness for our sins and he not only provided righteousness in which we can stand before God accepted and loved but he also secured for us every divine omnipotent effort in the future to make us happy. God will spare no effort to bless us with every blessing in the heavenly places which means, Talitha, that if you trust him to make for you the very best future possible which he promises to do, you won't ever be driven to sin to make your future better. I think they can get it.

I think they can get it. You may have to say it a hundred times. You may have to say it with tears.

They can get it, mom, but you've got to get it. You've got to get it. Finally, number four, pray for your children.

This comes right from verse one, doesn't it? Pray for the little ones. Pray for the prodigals without ceasing. Let Romans 10:1 be your daily testimony.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. Moms, don't grow weary. Don't let go.

Or maybe I should say this, children, grown children with unbelieving moms, don't grow weary. Don't let go. The gospel is the power unto salvation to everyone who believes.

Tell it often. Tell it well. Be patient and pray.

Mothers, may the Lord make this a rich day for you. May you savor his righteousness. Christ for righteousness to you who believe.

May you experience more freedom, more joy, more fearlessness in your role than you have ever known before. And now, Father, as some mothers come and take their white roses, as others walk out pondering, praying, as perhaps some come to be prayed for and with, would you apply this word, this gospel-saving word to us all? Lord, if there's any in the room who is still trying either to run from righteousness or to build their own righteousness, would you lay hold on them in mercy and incline their hearts freely to embrace Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes? In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

You are dismissed.

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