

Romans 10:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

Analysis

Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)—The second rhetorical question, *Tis katabesetai eis tēn abysson?* (τίς καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον; "Who shall descend into the abyss?"), parallels Deuteronomy 30:13's "beyond the sea" but intensifies it to abyss (ἄβυσσος)—the realm of the dead, Hades, Sheol. Paul interprets this as attempting **to bring up Christ again from the dead**—as if the Resurrection required human effort or could be repeated.

But God has already raised Christ (Rom 1:4; 4:24-25; 6:4; 8:11). The Resurrection is accomplished fact, the guarantee of justification (Rom 4:25). Faith-righteousness does not descend to the realm of death to manufacture victory—it confesses Christ's victory as already won. The double impossibility (ascending to heaven, descending to the abyss) emphasizes salvation by grace alone. No human work, however heroic, can secure what only divine action can accomplish and has already accomplished in Christ.

Historical Context

Ancient mythology often featured descent to the underworld (katabasis)—Orpheus seeking Eurydice, Aeneas consulting the dead, Heracles capturing Cerberus. Jewish tradition spoke of righteous figures like Enoch and Elijah ascending to heaven. Paul's point: the gospel does not require mythic heroism. Christ alone descended to the dead (the "harrowing of hell" tradition, based on 1 Pet 3:18-20)

and ascended in resurrection power. Believers participate in His finished work by faith, not imitation of His unique redemptive acts.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's completed work (Incarnation and Resurrection) free you from spiritual striving and performance anxiety?
2. What does it mean that justification depends on historical events (Christ's death and resurrection) rather than personal religious experience?
3. Where are you tempted to "descend to the abyss" in self-effort instead of resting in Christ's victory?

Interlinear Text

ἢ	Τίς	καταβήσεται	εἰς	τὴν	ἄβυσσον	τοῦτ'	ἔστιν
Or	Who	shall descend	into	G3588	the deep	(that	G2076
G2228	G5101	G2597	G1519		G12	G5124	
Χριστὸν	ἐκ	νεκρῶν	ἀναγαγεῖν				
Christ	from	the dead	again				
G5547	G1537	G3498	G321				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:20 (Parallel theme): Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

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