

HOW TO BE SAVED

Romans 9:30-10:21 (Key verse: 10:9)

"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

The message is based on the book of Romans chapter 9 verse 30 to chapter 10 verse 21. Key verse is verse 9 of chapter 10, and it reads, "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Paul has been teaching us about the plan of God for the salvation of the world. He declared that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."* ^{Rom 3:23-24} and that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. He also explained the promises of the gospel and the benefits of the same for those that have been saved. He says, *"there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* ^{Rom 8:1} and that nothing *"will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* ^{Rom 8:39} (So far so good, right?) We then suddenly see Paul speaking about the Israelites as it concerns the salvation plan of God. It is as if someone asked him, what about the Israelites, the people of your keen? How come not all of them believe? Beginning in chapter 9 and concluding in chapter 11, Paul addresses this point.

He begins in chapter 9 to explain why not all of them are saved. We heard through Shp. Desmond's message last week that Paul had a great desire for the people of Israel to be saved. Nevertheless, he later conceded that *"It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy."* ^{Rom 9:16} He defined for us the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God in salvation. Which doctrine declares that God is the One who ultimately determines who gets to be saved. (I hope that we remember Shp. Desmond's message and Lesedi's closing comments so that I don't have to develop this doctrine here, we are not doing that today—Amen!) What we want to focus on is how Paul continues to describe the reasons for Israel's unbelief and the actions they took which led to their own unbelief, especially in view of the truth about the Sovereignty of God in salvation.

Let's look at verses 1 and 2a of chapter 10, let's read them together on my count, *"Brothers and sisters, 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"* Paul is not delusional. He does not think that just because people have zeal for God, or that they have some sort of organized religion, then they are saved by Him. He does not even consider that the Israelites are saved, not even by their historical relationship with God. These are the people who protested even before Jesus when He called them sinners. They said to Him, *"Abraham is our father,"* ^{Jn 8:39} *"We are not illegitimate children... The only Father we have is God himself."* ^{Jn 8:41} (They said, audaciously!) And yet Paul says that he hopes for these people to come to the saving truth of God.

Now, why did Paul believe that they were not saved? Let's read chapter 9 verses 30 to 33 and chapter 10 verses 2b to 4. (Let me repeat that, we will read verse 30 to 33 and then jump to verse 2b starting at "But..." is it clear?) *30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. 32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame... but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3 Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."* (Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Can we read that part again?) These people were not saved because firstly, they pursued the law to gain righteousness before God. Because of that they tripped over the Rock of Zion, even Jesus Christ the LORD whom they rejected and will ultimately be put to shame when they are failed by their sin prone flesh. Secondly, they had a zeal for God, but their zeal is not based upon the knowledge of God about the righteousness that God requires and therefore, they sought to establish their own righteousness. The common factor in both situations is that the people of Israel rejected the righteousness of God which comes by faith in Jesus Christ and sought to establish their own. They did not understand or want to accept that righteousness that comes by faith, the standard of perfection before God is found not through the law, but through Jesus Christ. *"Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."* The righteous requirements of the

11 June 2023

South Africa

law are supposed to point us to Christ, who alone is able to satisfy them. It is because He is able to satisfy the law on our behalf that we are able and willing to declare and submit to Him as our LORD and Savior. Amen!

Paul says because of their rejection of the righteousness that comes by faith- which is really the rejection of Jesus Christ, the people of Israel are not saved. At this point Paul would be called a bigot in our generation. He would be classified as a hateful religious fundamentalist who is anti-Semitic/hating Jews. Apparently, the only way to love people is not by telling them the truth, right? We have such many people in the world...they have organized religion and nowadays they don't have to be outside the church anymore. We have those that nullify the sufficiency of Christ by wanting to add other things to His finished work...those of the so called "Church of Christ" who say that unless someone undergoes water baptism, they cannot be saved. We also have the Roman papacy who anathematized the doctrine of justification by faith alone at the council of Trent calling it an abomination, because apparently Jesus Christ is not sufficient to make us righteous before God. More relevant to our time, we have those that feel like they want to follow Jesus Christ, but they don't want to subject their feelings to His Lordship, so what do they do? They say they will pretend to play church in His name all the while denying His sufficient and efficacious work on the cross. Because of that they have raised oxymorons such as Gay pastors and women pastors and they are happy to play church. Even us, if we are doing anything to deny the righteousness that comes by faith, if we deny Christ either by our lives or by failing to defend His truth, we are as good as unsaved and woe to us. Paul says such people are not saved...and he does not think that he should compromise and start a one world religion with them as the culture would have us believe. He maintains his exclusive stance in remembering what the LORD Himself said to the disciples, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* ^{Jn 14:6} Christianity is naturally exclusive, unless you affirm Jesus Christ as LORD and Savior and as alone sufficient to make us stand before God righteously, you cannot come to God. Amen! There is a song that says, *"In the cross of Christ I glory. Towering o'er the wrecks of time. All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime."* Christ is the center of reality and existence. How can we even imagine or hope to approach God without Him!?

How does Paul consider that such people should be treated? Does he want us to go and bash them on social media and mock them? Look at verse 1 again, *"my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved."* Paul says that we should earnestly desire and pray for those that are not in Christ to be saved. In light of the sovereignty of God, we should pray to the only One who can save to save them. The fact that God is sovereign, even over salvation, gives us reason and confidence to pray. Amen! I think that we always have someone in our lives at a given time who is not in the LORD and seem most unlikely to ever come. I know that for myself, majority of my family remain outside of Christ. They no longer frown upon my faith, but outside they remain nonetheless. I have been trying for some years now to invite my grandmother into the light. She is 84 years of age and it has been my dear hope that before she runs out of time on this rock she may at least come to know the LORD, but every time she seems farther than before. I am encouraged by Paul here that I should not give up and that I should pray for her and ask the One who can give a heart of flesh to save. Amen!

(I feel like I should be done with my message and stop here...but it's not up to me...let's continue)

We have three sections to deal with:

In verses 5 through 8a, Paul compares the righteousness that is by the law against the righteousness that is by faith. Through verses 9b to 13 he illustrates the simplicity of salvation through the righteousness that is by faith and shows why it is better than the righteousness that is by the law. Finally in verses 14 to 21, he concludes by justifying evangelicalism as a means of bringing salvation and why the Israelites did not believe in spite of that means reaching them.

Let's read verse 5 to 8a and see the differences between the two sets of righteous standards. Let's go, *"5 Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: 'The person who does these things will live by them.' 6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim:"*

The differences between the two is a matter of difficulty in execution and maintenance. Those that will seek righteousness by the law will have to do everything that the law requires to the letter. If they one time, they are done for, no second chances. Consequently, you can imagine people who are tense and always worried about losing their righteousness and even their salvation. That is why Moses says, *"The person who does these things will live by them."* If you choose this way to gain righteousness, you have to do it through and through. I am not sure if you recall Shp Lesedi's closing remarks last week...if

11 June 2023

South Africa

you are saved by a particular thing that you have done that you can touch and hold onto that is within your control and management, you will have to spend your entire life clinging onto that thing to ensure that it does not get lost, ruined or spoiled, and we must submit that is very arduous and cumbersome.

On the other hand, the righteousness that is by grace is not arduous, it is not cumbersome- it is simple, but not easy. It requires faith in the word of God that is near us. We are to trust the written word of truth in exercising our faith and establishing the foundation of the same. Paul says elsewhere, *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."* ^{2Tim 3:16} It does not say, "If Jesus came down from heaven, then I would believe Him. (To which we say "Really? Remember some 2023 years ago when we came, and we did the thing to Him? Yet you still don't believe.) I had a friend once who used to say that if God would come down and confirm for him that Christianity is the one true religion, then he would believe...always told him that well, He did come, and you know the rest. We also learned about the sovereignty of God in salvation last week. Some of us might be tempted to want to complicate the way of salvation by wondering whether certain people are elect or predestined. I think I heard someone asking someone else, "Are you elect?" We shouldn't do that. Even when we evangelize, we don't go around wondering if people are elected to life or not, we just preach to all, okay!? The righteousness that is by faith does not employ these difficulties. It does not who will do this or that, rather it trusts in the historicity and truth of the teaching of scripture. Paul says that is the message concerning the faith we proclaim, that it is simple.

Let's read verses 9b to 13, *"9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

This is the simplicity and beauty of the fact of the gospel, *"9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* That is the only condition to obtain salvation. Now, notice it does not say if anyone is elect or predestined or whatsoever, but only that someone confesses and believes, then they are saved. Obviously, the Apostle is being overly simplistic here for the benefit of driving the point home. But He has already labored most of these principles in the foregoing chapters. He laid down the ground to make certain assumptions and qualifications. We must understand that the confession is not a mere verbal and empty expression, it must be based upon knowledge, as we read in verse 2. We have to confess the right Christ, and not the one we fashion in our minds, who agrees with everything we do and want. This right Christ must also be our LORD truly. We must and be willing to surrender all of our lives to him. The people who hate this righteous demand of Jesus as LORD over our lives have classified the practice as what they call "The lordship salvation." They fancy that people are able to accept Jesus as their savior and not submit to Him as LORD. We reject totally that claim and you can call us the LORDship salvation people if you want, but that is consistent with the biblical truth. Amen! Simple but not easy, right!? (We get it.) The second condition is that we must believe that God raised Him from the dead. This is the only historical quality of Jesus' person that sets Him apart from all other so-called mediators of other religions. Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Krishna etc., even Jesus, they all died, but only Jesus rose from the dead. So, this believe that He rose from the dead goes back to the exclusivity of Christianity as the only true religion. This Jesus Christ is true, if we simply believe in Him, we will not be put to shame because He cannot disappoint. Everything that was foretold about Him has been fulfilled. By believing in Him, all can receive the righteousness that is by faith. *"Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same LORD is LORD (there is that Lordship) of all and richly blesses all who call on him."* Amen!

The section concludes, *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* This leads us into the final section, evangelism as a means of bringing salvation and why the Israelites did not believe regardless of receiving the good news.

Let's read verses 14 and 15, *"14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

People must call on the name of the LORD to be saved. The questions that Paul asks here are very critical to the work that we do in spreading the gospel. It appears that God has established preaching and or evangelism as a primary means of bringing salvation to the world. God has decided to not whisper the message of the gospel into people's ears. He has determined that someone should go and deliver the good news to the world. This is also expressed in the great commission that Jesus gave the Apostles, who in turn handed it down to us in Holy writ, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* ^{Mat 28:19-20} I am sure we can still remember

11 June 2023

South Africa

what we learned last week that God is the One who chooses who gets to be saved. Now, if anyone was wondering, “then what should I do if God is the One who must save?” This is the answer! Go and preach the gospel and pray for the ones to whom you preach that God will save them according to His mercy. Don’t go around with an attitude of “well, I don’t know if this one is elect or not.” Just preach joyfully and trust God. Look at verse 15b, “*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*” According to some scholars, this verse carries an image of a watchman who, after seeing soldiers rejoicing for victory from afar, he then runs into the kingdom and he can be seen all the way from the palace that he is bringing good news because of how he runs, kicking the air with joy, such that his feet are beautiful. That is the attitude we should have when we evangelize. We should appear to be the ones who have seen the victory and are seeking to bring the good news to those that are waiting fearfully for the axe to drop. Don’t go out there dragging your feet thinking, “What’s the point? God will save whoever He will save.” We must go out there with hope and with joy. Amen!

The Israelites did not fail to obtain salvation merely because they were not “elect”. Everything was done for them. Many prophets and even the LORD Jesus Christ, were sent to them to bring them the good news of the kingdom.

16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. 18 But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” 19 Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” 20 And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” 21 But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

Israel did not believe the good news. It seems they have no excuse for their unbelief. We cannot say about them, “God did not choose them for life.” They chose not to believe because they are an obstinate and disobedient people. Shp. Lesedi will continue to explore this disbelief of Israel and its implications next week. But it is truly fascinating that the common means of grace was made available for them and yet they did not believe. Amen!

In conclusion,

The point that I think Paul is making in this passage is not very easy. He decried the fact that the Israelites were not saved from last week’s passage. He then conceded that it does not depend upon man’s desire or effort but on God’s mercy. The point, I suppose, is this, “if God is sovereign over salvation, doesn’t that make salvation difficult or complicated? And with that understanding, what can we do, if indeed we are supposed to do anything to participate in the world salvation plan of God as He calls us to participation in His word?” I believe that is why Paul puts the responsibility of the unbelief upon the Israelites. He does this by proving that they are the ones who rejected the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own. Paul also demonstrated that the righteousness that God has established is not too complicated for anyone to attain, but if we do not give up our pride and accept the word of truth that is near us, we will continue to wander in vain searches. Finally, even though God is sovereign over salvation, He requires that we continue to preach and bring the good news to the whole world and that we must trust that He will use our weak efforts to convert people and bring them into His kingdom. We are responsible for our unbelief, and we are also responsible for evangelism. Let us, therefore, be prayerful to God and ask that He helps us to overcome our unbelief and that He may also bless our efforts to bring even our loved ones into His kingdom. Amen!