

## WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED – NEW

**Romans 10: 1-13**

**2 Sam 22: 1-7**

As we move away from Easter and out of the shadow of the cross, I want to look at how we need to respond to the cross in order to gain the benefits that Jesus won for us there. So, as we look at the beginning of chapter 10 of Paul's letter to the Roman's this morning, you might want to open your Bibles at page [\*\*\*] so that you can follow it along with me.

The reading might have sounded a bit complicated, but come along with me as we unpack it together and you'll find a simple but vitally important message.

Now today I'm concerned about how WE can be saved and all those years ago Paul was concerned about how his fellow Jews could be saved – look at verses 1-3:

“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.” (Romans 10:1-3 NIV)

This concern of Paul for the Israelites is really strong. At the beginning of Romans Chapter 9 Paul actually wishes he might be cursed if only the Israelites could be saved. Paul is concerned here because he says the Israelites are devoted to God and eager to do his will, but they don't know what to do – “their zeal is not based on knowledge”. As verse 3 tells us the Israelites have not understood God's righteousness expressed in Christ – and Christ is the means God has chosen to bestow his righteousness on mankind. Instead the Israelites sought to establish their own righteousness based on Jewish Law. They didn't understand God's plan.

Verse 4 expresses this well:

“Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” (Romans 10:4 NIV)

So Christ’s coming has brought the authority of Jewish Law to an end, bringing in a new era of salvation history and now making God’s righteousness available to everyone – which by implication includes the Gentiles – the who ‘believes’. That’s US. We shall see precisely what it is that we need to believe a little later. Paul IS saying here that the Jewish Law is no longer central to our relationship with God – but he is NOT saying that Christ has “ended” Jewish Law. This is still part of God’s revelation in scripture and like all scripture is “profitable” to us and should be read, pondered and responded to. As Matthew reports in Chapter 5 of his gospel, Christ himself said: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). The birth, death and glorious resurrection of Christ are the culmination of Jewish Law and all OT scripture.

Paul contrasts the beauty and effectiveness of salvation by faith as compared to the dead ineffectiveness of salvation by the Law. Unfortunately many would be Christians today are, like the Israelites, still trying to make their own righteousness through religious observances or good works rather than trusting in Christ’s righteousness. But I have to tell you that such endeavours are doomed to failure. In God’s eyes even our most righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Paul then goes on to contrast righteousness that is by law with righteousness that comes from faith – look at verses 5-7:

“Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." 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) "or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” (Romans 10:5-7 NIV)

In verse 5, Paul is not saying that the law will bring salvation. As he says in his letter to the Galatians we are all cursed under the law for we do not obey everything it commands. The weakness of the law is

our weakness, because we disobey it. Paul then goes on to tell us that righteousness that comes from faith proclaims a different message. This message is that unlike the law the righteousness of Christ is readily available to us. We do not need to storm the ramparts of heaven or pothole in Hades. Christ has already died and risen and is easily accessible.

Paul then brings us towards the heart of his message – look at verse 8: “But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming:” (Romans 10:8 NIV)

Here Paul is paraphrasing Deuteronomy 30:14 and is saying that the word of faith – that is the message of the gospel – is being proclaimed by the apostles so that it may be in our hearts and mouths. Taking his cue from this verse of Deuteronomy Paul then goes on to give us the answer to the question posed by the title of my sermon today – he tells us what we must do to be saved – look at verses 9-10:

“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” (Romans 10:9-10 NIV)

Of course, you must believe ‘in your heart’. Heart and mouth, inward belief and outward expression belong together and cannot be separated. You must have a real live faith. One may superficially confess that ‘Jesus was raised from the dead’, or that ‘Jesus is Lord’ without anything having taken place in the heart. That’s the crux of the matter. If we do not believe in our ‘heart of hearts’ as we might put it today, then our faith is not real and it is not a saving faith. We must be convinced or persuaded. The Greek word for ‘faith’ in the NT comes from a root word that means ‘to persuade’. If we have faith we are completely persuaded, if we are not completely persuaded we do not have faith.

Again I say we must believe. Belief in this context is trust, having faith, nothing more. It is not belief plus works; it is simply belief. As Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians “For it is by grace you have

been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no-one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). But, we must believe in the right thing, sincere belief in the wrong thing is useless, it doesn't lead to salvation. George Washington's physicians sincerely believed in treating him with laxatives and bleeding when he fell ill. Their sincere belief in their treatment was completely misguided and they killed him.

So what must we believe in? We must believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. Then we see that the supernatural element of the Christian faith comes into focus. In our age, the words of verse 9 of our reading are of particular significance. We live in an age of scientific rationalism; an age of unbelief that in many ways differs from all previous ages. Science and materialism argue against belief in the supernatural in a way that previous generations have not had to combat. But excitingly, this barrier can be turned into an opportunity. An opportunity for us to demonstrate that we really believe in an almighty God of miracles.

What we believe in, the object of our saving faith is the resurrection of Jesus. He died a horrible death on the cross and was raised to life in a physical body. Yes it was a spiritual body, but it was also a physical body with some elements of continuity with his previous body. His resurrected body carried the marks of his crucifixion as the disciple Thomas learned for himself when he put his hands into Jesus' side.

Let's summarise where we've got to so far. We've seen that Christ's birth, and his death and resurrection have abolished Jewish Law *as Law* – although they have not abolished the relevance of OT scripture for us today. Christ's death and resurrection are the culmination of God's ultimate salvation plan and have brought into being a new and final covenant. We now trust in the freely available righteousness brought to us through Christ rather than salvation by our own efforts under the Jewish Law. All we need to do is believe in our hearts, to have trust and faith, that God raised Christ from the dead and to acknowledge with our mouths that he is Lord.

Some of you might want to ask at this point, why didn't Paul stress trusting Jesus' death on the cross as the object of faith. It is certainly true that Jesus' death on the cross provided the forgiveness for our sins. He paid the price for all the sins of the world past present and future and by his blood we are saved. Never forget that – it's the wonderful Christian message. Paul had already developed the idea of what saves us – Jesus' death on the cross – earlier in his letter to the Romans, principally in Chapters 3, 5 and 6. But, our reading today deals not with WHAT saves us – Jesus' death on the cross – but the nature of saving faith, the faith we need to have. Paul tells us that that is faith in Jesus' resurrection. We also have some indication from Jesus himself that this is the case in his words to Thomas recorded in John chapter 20 and verse 29 “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” That US – you and me!

It seems to me that the reason for this is quite simple. We don't need to understand all the technicalities of how Jesus' death on the cross saves – and you know I'm normally a man who loves technicalities – because this is a very profound doctrine. Lot's of well known Christians in history didn't really understand. Augustine, Aquinas and Anselm – even Martin Luther – clearly did not perceive all of the implications. Should we say that these great men will not be in heaven then? NO of course not. That is why anyone who simply believes in Jesus' resurrection and deity will be saved.

This is an important reminder that we are not saved by how much we know. It does not take a lot of knowledge to be saved. What matters is only that we believe and confess. That's amazing grace. That's amazing grace.

Paul's focus here on Christ's resurrection is not, of course, intended to detract from his death or from other aspects of his work; as Calvin explains, the resurrection alone is “often set before us as the assurance of our salvation, not to draw away our attention from his death, but because it bears witness to the efficacy and fruit of his death.”

So let's go back to those key verses 9 and 10 once again. We see that anyone can be saved who truly believes that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead if he also confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord. These are two separate conditions, both of which must be fulfilled. That is why Paul joined these conditions with AND in his epistle.

We might ask 'is it really possible to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and yet refuse to confess him as Lord'. I have to answer that I believe that it is. There are several biblical examples of this. There were guards at the tomb when Jesus was raised from the dead. How much they actually witnessed is not known. But it is undoubted that they knew that he had been raised. They knew that Jesus' disciples had nothing to do with the tomb being empty. They knew it in their hearts. Indeed, they told this to the authorities - the chief priests. There is every reason to believe that the chief priests believed the soldiers, for when news of this reached the Sanhedrin (who had ordered Jesus' execution) the Sanhedrin called a meeting. Did they then confess Jesus as Lord? No, not at all. Did the soldiers themselves confess Jesus as Lord? No not at all. Instead, the soldiers accepted a bribe to keep quiet about what they knew to be a fact, as is recounted in Matthew's gospel in chapter 28 verses 12-15. So both the chief priests and the soldiers knew that Jesus was raised from the dead but they wouldn't admit that he was the Lord, the Son of God.

I also believe that the opposite is possible. Some will confess Jesus as Lord but not believe that He was raised from the dead. We can say "Jesus is Lord" we can come forward or walk up an aisle at an evangelistic meeting – even in front of thousands. But, by itself, that's not enough.

That is precisely why the apostle Paul said 'if'. He was explaining that salvation depends on two conditions: belief and confession. BOTH of these must be present or there is no saving faith. That brings us on to the last verses of our reading - look at verses 11-13: "As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the

same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

(Romans 10:11-13 NIV)

Verse 11 reaffirms that our salvation is by faith. But, it also adds a new element. It tells us that the gospel is for everyone – all nations, races, tribes languages and colours. It's for all mankind. Verse 12 continues to affirm this element of universality and verse 13 reaffirms the faith and universality of verse 11.

Let's go back for a last time to verses 9 and 10 and the second requirement for salvation, confession that Jesus is Lord. Here Paul mentions confession with the mouth twice. It seems clear that a person must TELL IT, or say it, if he believes and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. As it says in Psalm 107 "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so". Jesus himself said "Whosoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whosoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."

It is as though confessing openly and verbally with our mouths ratifies our salvation. It validates it. It sets it into operation.

So what must we confess. We must confess that Jesus is Lord, the son of God. What is at stake here is the vindication of God's name and honour. In any event, it is only a matter of time. At the last every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Thus it is not a question whether we will confess Jesus Is Lord. It is only a question of when. Let's all do that now whilst we may still benefit from our confession.

There are some who will not confess here and now that Jesus Christ is Lord and there is good reason for this. As it says in I Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 3 "No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit". Thus confessing that Jesus is Lord is an affirmation of his deity and honour.

Having discussed at some length what we must do to be saved, what does it mean to be saved? To be saved is to be preserved from hell and go to heaven to be in paradise with our Father when our earthly body dies. Certainly salvation is these things, but it is so much more. It is to enter into a new relationship with our Father that will immeasurably enrich our lives – starting right from the moment of confession, but that’s a topic for next week!

I think we have reached the time to finally sum up what we have brought out this morning. We see that our salvation does not depend on what we know or what we do. Our works are as nothing. All we need to understand and do is to truly believe in the resurrection of Jesus and to publicly proclaim that he is our Lord, the Son of God. If we do these two things nothing else we do or do not do can add anything to or subtract anything from our glorious salvation. Yet both these two things are necessary, we know of no other way to salvation other than through Jesus Christ. As it is reported in John’s gospel, Jesus said "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6 NIV)

Let’s bow our heads for a word of prayer

Heavenly Father thank you that you have made our salvation so simple that even a child may understand. I pray that all who hear your words today will believe in the resurrection of your son Jesus and acknowledge and tell out that he is Lord, thereby accepting your wonderful gift of salvation even now this very day – because our salvation is far too important to put off to another day! Now I’m just going to pray a simple prayer of commitment based on what we’ve heard – those of you who feel moved to do so can pray it along with me.

Heavenly Father, we have heard that if we believe in our heart that You raised Christ from the dead and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord then we **SHALL** be saved. Therefore Father we say to You now that we believe in our hearts that You raised Jesus from the dead and we now say with our mouths here that Jesus is Lord. We make him Lord of our lives right here and right now. Amen