

## Who Has Believed

Lesson for May 26, 2024

**Unit III:** Standing in Faith

**Adult Topic:** Hearing and Believing

**Scriptural Background:** Romans 10:5-17

**Printed Text:** Romans 10:5-17

**Key verse:** “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.” (Romans 10:9, NIV)

During the Spanish-American War, Clara Barton was overseeing the work of the Red Cross in Cuba. One day Colonel Theodore Roosevelt came to her, wanted to buy food for his sick and wounded Rough Riders. But she refused to sell him any. Roosevelt was perplexed. His men needed the help and he was prepared to pay out of his own funds. When he asked someone why he could not buy the supplies, he was told, "Colonel, just ask for it!" A smile broke over Roosevelt's face. Now he understood – the provisions were not for sale. All he had to do was simply ask and they would be given freely.

*Our Daily Bread*, October 11, 1992

**Unifying Lesson Principle:** People want to follow prescribed steps that allow them to climb a guaranteed ladder to success. How do we react when others are offered a path to success that seemingly bypasses the rules we’ve carefully followed? In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrestles with the insufficiency of the zeal for God that comes through the Law versus the new path to God that comes through faith in Christ. (*Sunday School Commentary*, 2023-2024, Townsend Press, p. 345)

### Key Terms

1. **Ascend** (verse 6) – to go up; rise.
2. **Believed** (verse 16) – entrusted; had faith in; thought to be true.
3. **Deep** (verse 7) – a pit of an immeasurable depth used to hold the dead.
4. **Descend** (verse 7) – to go or come down.
5. **Heart** (verse 6) – the center of one’s physical and spiritual life; character; inner self.
6. **Live** (verse 5) – to be animated; breathing.
7. **Proclaim** (verse 8) – to herald or preach.
8. **Righteousness** (verse 5) – justice; justness; justness, morality and decency of which God is the source or author.
9. **Saved** (verse 9) – delivered; rescued; salvation.

## Lesson Background

Israel's condition has been summarized by Paul at the end of chapter 9:

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, "*Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed*" (Romans 9:30-33).

Israel was seeking righteousness and striving hard to attain it, but she had failed. The Gentiles, neither seeking nor striving for it, did attain righteousness. In terms of the gospel, Israel was failing where many more Gentiles were succeeding. What explanation could there possibly be for Israel's unbelief and the Gentile's turning to Messiah? In Romans 9 Paul answers from the divine perspective: the many who failed to become true Israelites were not chosen. God had purposed to save a small remnant of the nation, as the basis for Israel's future restoration. Those whom God chose not to save, He would nevertheless use to demonstrate His power and His glory.

Romans 9 concluded with Paul's declaration that his people, Israel, had tried to become righteous before God in the wrong way: by relying on their attempts to keep the law. They had refused to come to God by faith in Christ. Paul quoted Isaiah to show that Christ was the "stumbling stone" for Israel, but that all who believe in Him will not be put to shame.

## Lesson in Depth

### I. **The Path to Salvation** (Romans 10:1-10)

**Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel:** Paul's heart is in the right place. The desire of his heart and his prayers offered in Israel's behalf dwell on her salvation. While Israel failed in regard to salvation, Paul has not failed in his hopes and prayers for their salvation. His persistence in desiring and praying for Israel's salvation is well-founded, for God will someday bring this to pass. Israel's disobedience and failure is temporary. Paul's love and his desire for restoration is like God's for this people. Paul reaffirms his hope for Israel based upon God's character and purposes.

**I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God:** Paul will readily recognize that Israel has a zeal for God, but he also sees that it is zeal not according to knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

*Being religious is not the same as being righteous.* Israel's failure concerned righteousness. Although Israel might be commended for her religious zeal, she would be condemned for her lack of righteousness. The Jew's zeal, in their minds, was a zeal for God. Paul knew this from his own experience.

**Seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God:** Israel had a lack of knowledge. But that wasn't their only problem. They also had a *moral* problem: they have not *submitted* to the righteousness of God.

Israel's problem was self-righteousness. Self-righteousness blinds men to God's righteousness. Israel wanted to establish her own righteousness. She did not want to receive righteousness as a gift of grace, but she wanted to earn it as the wages of her own good works. In seeking to establish her own righteousness, Israel refused to submit to the righteousness of God as revealed and offered in Jesus Christ. Like Israel, those who wish to stand on their own merits will not submit themselves to the righteousness God provides. Israel did not want charity. The offer of righteousness was not overlooked as much as it was resisted and rejected. Israel's "ignorance" was willful.

People cannot come to Jesus without the right information about the gospel, but information alone is not enough to save anyone. There must be a radical *submission* to the righteousness of God, putting away our own righteousness.

We cannot neglect the emphasis on *personal responsibility*. All of Paul's teaching of God's election and right to choose does not diminish man's responsibility.

**Christ is the end of the law:** Jesus is the *end of the law* for those who believe. The law *ends* for the believer in the sense that our obedience to the law is no longer the basis for our relationship with God. The law has *not* come to an end in the sense of no longer reflecting God's standard or no longer showing us our need for a Savior.

"Christ did not come to make the law milder, or to render it possible for our cracked and battered obedience to be accepted as a sort of compromise. The law is not compelled to lower its terms, as though it had originally asked too much; it is holy and just and good, and ought not to be altered in one jot or tittle, nor can it be. Our Lord gives the law all it requires, not a part, for that would be an admission that it might justly have been content with less at first." (Spurgeon)

**But the righteousness of faith:** "The word is nigh thee" is quoted from (Deuteronomy 30:14), which was quoted in the previous scripture. The journey of (verses 6 and 7), is unnecessary because God has clearly revealed the way of salvation: it is by faith. The Word of faith is the message of faith and that is the way to God.

*"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33)*

We can clearly see the importance of the things we say from all of this. Faith, we know is believing in things we cannot see. If you can see something, it takes no faith to believe. Jesus Himself said, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed.

*“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed [are] they that have not seen, and [yet] have believed.” (John 20:29)*

This faith is based on Jesus, and we don't have to “work” to get Jesus. It is not as if we have to ascend into heaven or descend into the abyss to gain Jesus. *We believe and receive.*

**But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.”** Instead of having to go to great lengths to *achieve* righteousness by the law, we can immediately *receive* righteousness by faith, by trusting in the word of the gospel.

**If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved:** We do not gain God's righteousness by works. Instead, we gain it by *confessing* and *believing* in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**Confess with your mouth:** Confession has the idea of *agreeing with*. When we confess... the Lord Jesus, we agree with what God said about Jesus, and with what Jesus said about Himself. It means we recognize that Jesus is God, that He is the Messiah, and that His work on the cross is the only way of salvation for mankind.

**Believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead:** We must also believe this. Some wonder why Paul didn't mention the crucifixion in this passage. But when Paul emphasizes the need to believe **that God has raised him from the dead**, it is not that we believe the resurrection as *opposed* to the cross, but *encompassing* the work of Jesus on the cross.

**Believe in your heart:** Mere intellectual agreement with the facts of the cross and the resurrection is not enough. You must **believe in your heart**; and even that belief is not enough without accompanying action: **confess with your mouth**.

“We believe everything which the Lord Jesus has taught, but we must go a step further, and trust him. It is not even enough to believe in him, as being the Son of God, and the anointed of the Lord; but we must believe on him... The faith that saves is not believing certain truths, nor even believing that Jesus is a Savior; but it is resting on him, depending on him, lying with all your weight on Christ as the foundation of your hope. Believe that he can save you; believe that he will save you; at any rate leave the whole matter of your salvation with him in unquestioning confidence. Depend upon him without fear as to your present and eternal salvation. This is the faith which saves the soul.” (Spurgeon)

**For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation:** These two together (belief and confession) result in **righteousness** and **salvation**. We should not ignore how simple this is (whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved) and what an affront this is to every attempt of the flesh to be justified or any attempt to find salvation based on national or ethnic foundation.

Saving faith consists of three elements.

1. **Mental:** the mind understands the gospel and the truth about Christ
2. **Emotional:** one embraces the truthfulness of those facts with sorrow over sin and joy over God's mercy and grace.
3. **Volitional:** willful decision where the sinner submits his will to Christ and trust in Him alone as the only hope of salvation.

Genuine faith always produces authentic obedience.

**God hath raised Him from the dead:** Christ's resurrection was the supreme validation of His ministry. Belief in it is necessary for salvation because it proved that Christ is who He claimed to be and that the Father had accepted His sacrifice in the place of sinners. Without the resurrection, there is no salvation.

This leaves absolutely no doubt at all what we must do to be saved.

Confession is made unto salvation: One is not saved by his mouth's conversation, (meaning many, who by their head knowledge say they are saved, but really are not), but rather, the mouth testifies readily of the grace of God in Christ which has been received by faith (for those who have been truly saved and their words are coming from their heart).

Confession is the Greek word basically means to say the same thing, or to agree with someone. The person who confesses Jesus as Lord, agrees with the Father's declaration that Jesus is Savior and Lord. We can never forget all that it meant to say that Jesus Christ is Lord. "If a man called Jesus *kurios* he was ranking him with the emperor and with God; he was giving him the supreme place in his life; he was pledging him implicit obedience and reverent worship." (Barclay)

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation: These two together (belief and confession) result in righteousness and salvation. We should not ignore how scandalously simple this is (whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved) and what an affront this is to every attempt of the flesh to be justified or any attempt to find salvation based on national or ethnic foundation.

## II. The Method of Salvation (Romans 10:11-17)

Both Jew and Greek were quick to give some credit to national or ethnic origin, as if being saved were a matter of being born into the right family. But Paul makes it clear: **There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.**

**The Scripture says:** “Referring, I think, to the general sense of Scripture, rather than to any one passage. There are several texts from which it may be gathered that believers shall not be put to shame.” (Spurgeon)

**All who call upon Him:** The Lord is the Lord of all people, and He gives good gifts to all who call on Him. Everyone who calls on Him will be saved.

**How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?:** Paul shows how necessary it is for him to continue preaching this gospel, regardless of the objections of those who oppose him. If people must call on the name of Jesus to be saved, they must first believe in Him. Before they can believe, they must hear about Him.

**How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?** Paul rightly observes that it all goes back to the preaching of the gospel, and preachers must be **sent** – both by God and the Christian community at large.

**How shall they hear without a preacher?** In order to hear, someone must preach to them. And before a representative of Christ can preach, he must be sent.

Possibly, God could have chosen any means for the message of salvation to come, such as angelic messengers or directly working without a human preacher. Nevertheless God’s “normal” way of bringing people to Jesus Christ is through the preaching of the gospel.

**How beautiful are the feet:** No wonder those who preach have **beautiful feet** – they partner with God for the salvation of men. The *feet* speak of activity, motion, and progress, and those who are active and moving in the work of preaching the gospel have *beautiful feet*.

“How beautiful are the feet” comes from Isaiah 52:7, *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”*

The good news is not only a gracious offer but a command to believe and repent. “Believed our report” is a scripture quoted from Isaiah 53:1.

**Glad tidings of good things:** Obviously, the salvation Isaiah prophesied about could not be salvation through works or the law. To say “You can be right before God if you work hard enough” is not a gospel of **peace**, and that message does not bring **glad tidings of good things**.

**But they have not all obeyed the gospel:** If salvation is so simple, available to all who trust in the person and work of Jesus, then why does Israel seem to be cast off from God? Because many among them had not **believed his report** – because they did not trust in God’s word through Isaiah and other messengers of the gospel. Therefore they are not saved.

**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:** Saving faith comes through **hearing by the word of God**. Though Israel heard, they did not exercise saving faith in Christ – making them (and us) all the more responsible. “*Hearing* is a reflection of first-century life. Paul does not raise the possibility of the message being read. While there were people who could read, the ordinary first-century citizen depended rather on being able to hear something.” (Morris)

### Lesson Summary

Romans 10:1-17 provide a comprehensive understanding of the Christian doctrine of salvation, emphasizing faith in Christ, the importance of preaching, and the universal accessibility of the gospel. Specifically, we learn:

1. **Zeal without Knowledge:** Paul acknowledges the zeal of the Israelites for God but points out that their zeal is not based on knowledge (Romans 10:2). This teaches the importance of having a correct understanding of God’s righteousness and not just a passionate devotion.
2. **Righteousness Based on Faith:** Paul contrasts the righteousness based on the law with the righteousness based on faith. He emphasizes that Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (Romans 10:4). This highlights that salvation comes through faith in Christ rather than through adherence to the law.
3. **The Accessibility of Salvation:** The message of salvation is near and accessible: “*The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart*” (Romans 10:8). This underscores that anyone can attain salvation by believing in their heart and confessing with their mouth that Jesus is Lord.
4. **The Universality of the Gospel:** This passage emphasizes that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him (Romans 10:12). This teaches that the Gospel is for everyone, regardless of their background or ethnicity.
5. **The Process of Salvation:** Paul outlines the process of salvation: believing in the heart and confessing with the mouth (Romans 10:9-10). This signifies the importance of both internal faith and external declaration in the Christian faith.

6. **The Necessity of Preaching:** The passage underscores the importance of preaching for people to hear and believe the gospel: "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?" (Romans 10:14). This highlights the essential role of evangelism and spreading the message of Christ.
7. **Faith Comes by Hearing:**
  - Paul concludes that faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ (Romans 10:17). This emphasizes the power of hearing the word of God in developing and strengthening faith.