

Romans 10:9

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 April 2010

Preacher: David MacPherson

- [0 : 00] After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.
- There was a violent earthquake, but an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning. And his clothes were white as snow.
- The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.
- He is not here. He has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples.
- He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you. So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.
- [1 : 15] Suddenly Jesus met them. Greetings, he said. They came to him, clasped his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid.
- Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me. Our familiarity with the account that we have read.
- Perhaps dulls our appreciation of how remarkable it is. Jesus of Nazareth, executed by crucifixion on Friday, has risen from the dead on Sunday morning.
- The one who was dead is now alive. I have a simple question for you this morning.
- Do you believe this is true? What we have read in Matthew's gospel and earlier in the service in Luke's gospel, or in John's gospel, rather.
- [2 : 26] Do you believe it's true? It's a simple enough question, I suppose, and I imagine, or I think it reasonable to say, that there's three possible answers to that question.
- You can answer, Yes, I do believe that what we have read, what is recorded for us in the gospels, is true. These things actually happen. Your response can be, and it would be the response of many, No, I don't believe that happened.
- It's a nice story. It's an interesting account. But I don't believe that actually happened. That is another possible response to the question, Do you believe this is true?
- But I suppose there is a third possibility that you may be undecided. You're not sure. You think it may be true. But again, you're not entirely persuaded or convinced.
- That, I guess, might also be the position of some. Does it matter? Does it matter if you believe or not these accounts that we've read?
- [3 : 37] In one regard, it doesn't matter, as the truth of it is affected, not one whit, by whether you believe it to be true or not.
- And that goes both ways. Even if you believe passionately that it's true, that doesn't make it true. And even if you believe passionately that it's not true, that doesn't make it not true.

So the truth of these things isn't, in a sense, affected by whether you believe it to be true or not. However, in another regard, it matters a very great deal.

And, of course, it may be self-evident, but it's worth stating that I come to this on the basis and in the conviction that these things are, of course, true.

And in one regard, it does matter a great deal whether you believe or not that these things happened. It matters to you.

[4 : 38] It is central, if the Bible is to be believed, it is central to your salvation. We'll be developing a little of what that means. It is of great importance in determining your eternal destiny, your life now, but also eternally.

It is of great importance in establishing whether you will have the opportunity to live life in the manner that God intends you to live it.

In the words of Jesus, life in all its fullness. Listen to what Paul says in his letter to the Romans in chapter 10 and verse 9.

And this morning we're going to be considering these words of Paul. In Romans chapter 10 and verse 9, it's on page 1137 of our Bibles.

Romans chapter 10 and verse 9, we read, The verse that we've just read from Paul's letter to the Romans is one of a number of what we might call summary statements that provide us with an executive summary of the gospel, of the Christian message, of the essence or heart of the message.

[6 : 23] It's clear in the context of the verse that it is Paul's intention to provide such a summary statement. As this verse that we've read, verse 9, serves to provide content to what in the previous verse Paul calls the word of faith.

We read there, or rather in the reading from 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.

That. That. So, the word of faith, this message that Paul proclaims, this message that the church of Jesus Christ announces to a listening world, is the word of faith.

What is the content of that word of faith? Well, Paul goes on to tell us the content. That. The word of faith. What is it? Well, it is this. 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.

This is our message, Paul says. Now, evidently, in these few words, we don't have an exhaustive description of the gospel message.

[7 : 40] It's not intended to exhaustively grant us all that is true. But it is intended to be a clear and cogent summary of this word of faith, of this Christian message.

Indeed, the words that we've read there in Romans chapter 10 and verse 9, the words that we're going to be considering this morning, could serve as an answer to the question, what is the gospel?

What is this good news? You Christians, here at Easter time, you talk about Jesus and how he died and how he rose again. You talk about the gospel and the good news.

Well, what is this message? What is this gospel that you speak of? Well, if we had a very short time and we only were able to say a few words, then these words would be very fitting words to answer that question.

What is the gospel? What is the message? Well, it is this, 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.

[8 : 53] Now, returning to where we began, this verse teaches that believing that Jesus rose again from the dead is essential or necessary for our salvation.

We ask the question, does it matter? Well, we began by asking the question, do you believe the account that we read, that Jesus rose from the dead? And then we said, well, does it matter? Well, here, if Paul is to believe, it matters a great deal because it is a necessary condition for us to be saved, that we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Now, of course, even at this point, some might reasonably and legitimately respond by taking a step back and asking, but do I need to be saved?

Or perhaps even more, a basic question, what does that actually mean, to be saved? It's very religious language, isn't it? People speak about being saved.

Are you saved? I remember when I was 10 years old and then I was at a beach camp and one of the leaders came up to me and he said, David, are you saved? And I was most intimidated by the question, I must admit.

[10:04] And I had mumbled something and tried to wriggle out of the conversation as quickly as I could. And so, perhaps there are those who might respond, well, what does that mean, to be saved?

What's that all about? Well, let's consider this verse. Let's briefly, I hope, consider this verse and we can do so by asking and answering two questions that have an answer given to them in the verse.

And the first is this, what does it mean to be saved? We're saying that believing that Jesus rose from the dead is one of the things necessary for us to be saved. But we're taking a step back and first of all, we're asking, well, what does that mean?

What does it mean to be saved? And then secondly, what do you need to do to be saved? Which is really what this verse more particularly addresses.

What does it mean to be saved? Well, this verse by itself doesn't give the answer. The verse, the statement of Paul assumes knowledge.

[11:08] Now, in fairness, the knowledge that it assumes would have been available to anybody who had carefully read this letter thus far.

Let's not forget that this is a letter that Paul has written to the church in Rome. And there is an order to the letter. There is a sequence to it.

Now, we're jumping in halfway through the letter. But anybody who had carefully listened to or read the letter and had reached this point would have had a great deal of information concerning what it means to be saved.

We, this morning, haven't done that. And so, it's necessary for us to briefly touch on the subject and answer the question, what does it mean to be saved?

What does being saved involve? That is a huge question, which we will have to answer very briefly. But we can say this, that the Bible presents salvation as involving two aspects, being saved from and being saved for.

[12:18] Now, these two aspects, as we'll notice, I hope, as we continue, are very much tied together. They are, if you wish, the two sides of the same coin.

But they can be considered separately for the purposes of greater understanding. So, we are saved from and we are saved for. Well, what are we saved from?

Well, that takes us to Christmas, or it takes us to the gospel accounts of the coming of Jesus. There in Matthew, in chapter 1 and in verse 21, we're given the answer to the question, why did Jesus come?

This Jesus who died and this Jesus who we claim rose again. Why did He come? Well, there in Matthew, chapter 1 and verse 21, we're told that Jesus came to save His people from their sins.

So, this was the reason for His coming, to save His people from their sins. Saved from. Saved from our sins.

[13 : 18] Saved from our sins. But again, we can make the statement, and it's easy enough to make it, but it begs the question, what does that mean? What does it mean to be saved from our sins?

Well, sin has consequences. And Jesus, and Jesus' work on our behalf, is intended to save us from the consequences of our sin.

I'm going to mention three, just in the passing almost. And again, this is not intended to be exhaustive, but three consequences of sin that Jesus saves us from, and that explains us in a measure what salvation is all about, being saved from.

Well, one consequence of my sin, and one consequence of your sin, is alienation from God. Sin, or let's call it disobedience, to use a word that doesn't have the same kind of religious overtones, or just a more commonly used word, disobedience.

Disobedience separates us from God. Now, this is visibly illustrated at the very beginning in the book of Genesis, in the Garden of Eden.

[14 : 32] And we are told of how Adam and Eve were told by God what they could do and what they could not do, and they disobeyed. They ate from the tree that they had been told they ought not to eat from.

They disobeyed. They sinned. What was the consequence of that? Well, Adam and Eve had enjoyed friendship with God. They were friends with God. Adam walked in the garden with God.

They disobeyed, and they lost that friendship. They were very symbolically and graphically removed from the garden.

They were separated from God. They lost the friendship that they had enjoyed with God. They were alienated from God. This is a consequence of sin.

But a further consequence of sin is that we are under the judgment of God, the anger of God. Now, this is not a popular message, but it is one that is clearly stated in the Scriptures, that God, who is altogether holy and altogether pure and altogether just is rightly and justly angry with us because of our sin, because of our disobedience.

[15 : 52] Disobedience angers God. And so we need to be saved from this anger. We need to be saved from our alienation, from our separation. We need to be saved from God's anger.

And this is what salvation provides for us. If we just turn a couple of pages back in this very letter, we notice how Paul has dealt with this matter.

In chapter 5 of Romans and in verse 9, we read, Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath or anger through Him?

Saved from God's wrath. The anger of God is a consequence of our sin, and we need to be saved from it. Another consequence of our sin is death.

We're told, again, in this very letter to the Romans, that the wages of sin is death. The consequence of sin. The wages of sin is death. That involves not just physical death, but spiritual death.

[17 : 00] So to be saved is to be delivered from these consequences. Jesus came to save His people from their sin. What does that mean? Well, it means that we are saved from the consequences of our sin.

So we are saved from these things, but we are also saved for. In effect, as already commented, this is the other side of the same coin.

We are saved for friendship with God. Friendship with God was lost. We're alienated from God. And our salvation involves being saved from that alienation, but saved to a restored relationship of friendship with God.

In fact, not only friends with God, but being part of the very family of God. We are adopted into God's family when we are saved. But we are saved also to enjoy the approval of God.

No longer the anger of God, but rather the approval of God. God is no longer angry with us when we are saved. Indeed, quite the reverse. God is pleased with us as He sees us united to His Son, Jesus.

[18 : 16] As Christians, we are in Jesus. We are united to Jesus as we trust in Jesus. And the Father looks down upon us, and He sees us in that union with Jesus Christ.

And He is pleased with us. No longer angry, but rather pleased. We now meet with His approval. But we are saved for life.

Saved from death for life. Granted new life. Eternal life. And eternal life speaks not so much of quantity of life or length of life, but rather eternal life speaks of quality of life.

Life in a new spiritual dimension that at its heart basically involves knowing God. In John chapter 17 and verse 3, we're actually given a definition of eternal life.

And what is it that we read there in that verse? John chapter 17 and verse 3. Now this is eternal life. That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

[19 : 24] Jesus Himself is saying, what is eternal life? Well, it is to know God and the one He has sent, Jesus Christ. Which really, in a way, brings us back to the beginning of having been alienated from God.

But eternal life restores a relationship of friendship with God. Well, these words then answer, perhaps in a small measure, the question, what does it mean to be saved?

But the verse we have before us in Romans is concerned, perhaps more particularly, with what is required that we might be saved. And this is our second question.

What do you need to do to be saved? To be saved from the consequences of your sin? To enjoy this friendship with God? To enjoy the approval of God?

To enjoy this eternal life? What do you need to do? What do I need to do? Well, here, our verse does give us a very clear answer. It says that there are two things that need to be done.

[20 : 25] 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. Two things, to confess and to believe. I don't think there is a great significance in the order.

Paul himself inverts the order in this very chapter. And we'll begin with the second of the conditions that are stated in this verse, that you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

This is something you must do. That's where we began this morning. Does it matter if you believe or not? Well, it does matter. It is one of the conditions for being saved.

We have to believe. You have to believe. And this belief has clear content. This is very important. Many people today would have no difficulty in stating that they believe.

Many people might say, I'm a believer. But if you were to pursue that and say, well, okay, what do you believe? You would have a disparity of answers.

[21 : 29] The content of that belief would be very different from one person to another. Now, what Paul is saying here is that it's not just a case of believing in some vague way, but that that belief must have content.

What is the content? Well, the content that he gives as being of crucial importance is that you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. Which rather begs the question, well, is that all you need to believe?

Is there no need to believe anything in particular about the identity of Jesus, his life, his death? Well, Paul is not saying that these things are unimportant or that these things are things we need not believe.

Rather, to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is to believe all that the Gospels tell us concerning his identity and his work.

That this is what Paul means, and that we're not forcing this on him. That this is what Paul means is made clear by the manner in which he presents the resurrection as proof of the veracity of the total message.

[22 : 39] When Paul was preaching in Athens, and he had presented the Gospel message in an appropriate way to that audience in Athens, he concludes his message by saying, And God has given proof of all these things by raising Jesus from the dead.

So Paul is saying that the resurrection is proof that everything else about Jesus is true. What the Bible tells us about who he is, the eternal Son of God. What the Bible tells us about the death and the meaning and the purpose of his death in the place of sinners, and so on and so on.

The resurrection proves that these things are true. So somebody says, Well, you say that Jesus is the Son of God. You say that he died for sinners. But how can I know? And Paul would respond, Well, here's the proof.

God raised him from the dead. God granted his seal of approval to all that Jesus claimed for himself and all that is said of him in the Scriptures by raising him from the dead. So when Paul here in this chapter and in this verse says that you must believe that God raised him from the dead, he is really saying that you must believe all that is said in the Gospels concerning who Jesus is and what he has done.

To believe that God raised Jesus from the dead involves the belief that Jesus is all that he claimed to be and that he has accomplished all that he came to perform.

[24 : 08] Now that doesn't mean that we need to know and believe every last detail. But it does suggest that what is being required that we might be saved is to know who Jesus is, to know what he has done, and to believe that he rose again from the grave.

And so I ask the question, Do you believe what the Bible says concerning who Jesus is, the eternal Son of God? Do you believe that he died on the cross in the place of sinners?

Do you believe that the Father raised him again from the grave? This is what we must believe. But there's another question we just need to touch on very briefly before moving on to the second requirement, which is that we confess with our mouth.

We're still thinking about believing. And this second question isn't so much what you believe, but we might put it this way, Where do you believe? Now that may seem a very strange question, but really I'm seeking to draw out the manner in which Paul speaks about believing in our heart.

Because it says there that it is necessary for you to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. What does that mean? Where are we to believe?

[25 : 24] Well, in our heart. In its biblical use, the heart is the core of one's being, or inner man, or inner woman. And the heart includes the intellect, but also involves the will and the emotions.

So, to believe in your heart is to give intellectual assent to truth, to say, yes, I intellectually believe these things that you read in John's gospel and Matthew's gospel are true.

But to believe in your heart also involves making an appropriate response of the will to that truth. It involves embracing the Savior who is offered to you in the gospel.

To believe in the sense that it is being used here goes beyond simply intellectually consenting to something being true. It's, if you wish, a package deal.

And if elements are missing, then we don't really believe at all. Sometimes we do make that distinction. Perhaps I've done so myself on occasions as in preaching. It's not enough to believe these things to be true.

[26 : 33] You need to respond. Well, yes, I can see a manner in which that is a legitimate way to speak. And yet, in actual fact, believing as understood in the manner it is used in the Scriptures involves responding.

If you don't respond, then you don't truly and genuinely and adequately believe. You believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.

It involves your intellect. It involves your will. It involves your affections also. So the first condition is to believe in your heart. But the second condition to be saved is that you confess with your mouth.

If believing in the heart is the inward, then confessing is the necessary outward expression of that inward reality.

To be saved. That is our great need. That is this requirement of public confession. What are we to confess?

[27 : 40] Well, Paul tells us we are to confess these seemingly very simple words. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord. This is what we are to publicly confess if we are to be saved.

We believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead. We believe in our heart who Jesus is and what he has done for sinners. We respond to that.

But we also must confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord. It is a simple statement, but it's a statement that is replete with or brimming with significance.

We could say that this confession involves a threefold conviction. It involves conviction regarding who Jesus is. It involves conviction regarding the authority that he enjoys.

But it also involves a personal submission to that authority. And we'll look at these things, and with that we will close. To confess Jesus is Lord involves, first of all, a recognition of who Jesus is.

[28 : 46] You see, to make this claim that Jesus is Lord is to make a claim of huge significance. To understand that, we need to understand how this word was understood by those who would have been reading this letter.

This is a letter to the church in Rome. And in the Roman Empire, the highest title that Caesar could claim, and he had many titles, the highest title he could claim was kurios, the Greek word kurios, or Lord.

And it was a divine title. When Caesar claimed to be Lord, he claimed to be divine. And so Paul is saying that if you are to be a Christian, you have to confess that Jesus is Lord, understanding that word in all its significance.

In the Roman context, well, the Caesar claimed to be God. He claimed to be divine. But more importantly is the way this word was used in its Jewish or Hebrew context.

We have, and it was available at the time of Jesus, and as Paul wrote these letters, there was what was known as the Septuagint, which was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

[29 : 57] And in the Septuagint, every time that we find the name of God, Jehovah or Yahweh, it was translated by this Greek word kurios, or Lord.

Now, this was something that was very much at the forefront of the minds of those who would have been reading this letter. The Jews, certainly, who were reading this letter, when they are told that they must declare that Jesus is Lord, they immediately would have brought to mind that this is the title that, in their Bible, is given to God himself.

Jehovah or Yahweh. So to declare Jesus is Lord is to declare that Jesus is Jehovah, that Jesus is God. So there is great content in this seemingly very simple declaration.

To confess that Jesus is Lord is to demonstrate conviction concerning who he is. But it also demonstrates recognition of the authority that he enjoys.

Now, this flows necessarily from an understanding of who he is. If we have recognized and if we believe that he is indeed divine, that he is God, then that necessarily grants to him great authority.

[31 : 16] However, this confession, this formulation, Jesus is Lord, also points particularly to the authority that he enjoys as the one exalted by the Father to the highest place, as Paul himself explains in his letter to the Philippians.

In Philippians chapter 2 and verses 9 to 11, we read that following his death, having been come obedient to death, even death on a cross, then we read, therefore God exalted him to the highest place, exalted Jesus to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess, what?

That Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So this confession, Jesus is Lord, is a confession that carries with it a recognition that Jesus has been exalted to the highest place, that he is the one who enjoys absolute authority over all in heaven and on earth.

So this is no simple parrot-fashioned repetition of words. Jesus is Lord. It implies a recognition of his authority, and related to that is the third thing we want to say, is that it requires a personal submission to that authority.

Now this is maybe obvious, and yet it remains crucial. To confess Jesus is Lord is to confess that Jesus is my Lord. And it involves a submitting of all that we are and all that we have to him.

[33 : 02] We hand everything over to him precisely because he is Lord, and he is worthy of all that we are and all that we have.

To utter the words, Jesus is Lord, and yet refuse to submit to his authority, is meaningless. We might even say it's worse than meaningless.

So while it may be a simple thing to recite, as we've commented, parrot-fashion the words, to do so in a meaningful way is huge. And given that it is so huge, it ought not to surprise us that Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, recognizes, and we quote, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

To make this confession in a manner that is meaningful, that recognizes who Jesus is, the authority that he enjoys, submitting to that authority is something that is done with the help of God himself as he makes these truths known to us and helps us to bow the knee before his Son, Jesus Christ.

So as we close, I would ask you the question, have you publicly confessed that Jesus is your Lord? Now some, as they consider these words of Paul, suggest that in the early church, this was the confession, the verbal confession that believers would make at baptism.

[34 : 37] At baptism, they would verbalize these words, Jesus is Lord. Now that may be so. We don't know for sure. I think the Bible doesn't specify a particular occasion when we must confess in this way.

It is necessary to confess publicly, but there isn't rules laid down as to the occasion. In our own context, I suppose, in our own tradition, public profession of faith is something that we do as we participate in the Lord's Supper.

And in that way, we publicly declare our recognition that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus is my Lord, that Jesus died for me, that he's my Savior.

And this is necessary. Paul says 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.

What do you need then to be saved? Well, it is there before us. Believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

[35 : 54] And Easter Sunday would seem a particularly fitting day to do just that. And if you do, you will be saved.

Let us pray.