

Romans 10

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[0 : 00] We read from Romans chapter 10 and verse 13 there, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

That was a text used at a funeral I was at towards the end of last year. And I was so intrigued by the message that was given there that I was led to research the idea of what the Bible says about the calling on the name of the Lord.

This calling on the name of the Lord is a theme that runs through the Bible, the Old Testament and into the New. And the text is found here again in our reading tonight.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Now, the first time we hear of people calling on the name of the Lord goes away back to the beginning, to Genesis chapter 4.

And Adam and Eve are at this time, they've been kicked out of the garden, shall we say, because of their sin, because of their disobedience. Cain and Abel are born. Cain becomes a farmer and Abel a shepherd.

[1 : 17] And Cain kills Abel and buries his brother's body. That's a shortened version of the story. And the Lord asks Cain there in Genesis 4 and 7, where is your brother Abel?

There's a similar question that the Lord had for Adam and Eve. Where are you? Where is your brother Abel? Where are you? And in the story, we find deceit and avoidance and truthfully answering the question here.

You see, what's happening is sin is already taking root among the earth's inhabitants. And when we think of that question in verse 7 of Genesis 4, where is your brother Abel?

Do we know where our brothers and our sisters are in Christ today?

Do we really care? Do we make excuses for ourselves and for them when we refuse to share Christ with them?

[2 : 28] It's a thought to ask ourselves that kind of question. The story in Genesis continues and gives us a bit of a genealogy. From Cain, whose wife gives birth to Enoch, and so on, to a newborn son to Adam and Eve named Seth.

And we read, God has granted me another child in place of Abel since Cain killed him. Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

At that time, men began to call on the name of the Lord. That's the first time we hear of people calling on the name of the Lord in the Old Testament.

It's Genesis 4 and verse 26. Now, this idea of calling on the name of God is more than the act of prayer alone, I believe.

It's about appealing to God. Appealing to God for mercy. When Paul says in Acts 25, I appeal to Caesar. It's a similar word that appears for appeal.

[3 : 39] It's the same word that's translated call or calling in Acts 21 and Romans 10 and 13 here. So it's an appeal. It's a call to God. Paul is not simply saying, I'm calling on Caesar to save me.

Paul is actually appealing to Caesar. So it's even stronger than just calling. He was claiming the right of being a Roman citizen to have his case judged by Caesar.

So that Paul has to submit to the soldiers who will take him to Rome in order for his case to be brought before Caesar. And in the same way, and in a similar way, a calling on the name of the Lord involves an appeal from us.

In fact, it's more than that. It's a submission to him. I preached from Sephaniah, well, I was going to say recently, but it was a wee while ago now when I was finishing off in Gardenston.

And there in Sephaniah 3 and 9, a person's calling is linked with service. Verse 9 says of Sephaniah 3, Then I will purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, and serve him shoulder to shoulder.

[5 : 07] So the calling is linked with serving here. So as we submit to the will of God, it can actually be described as submitting to the call of God and calling upon him.

In salvation, a person must submit to the Lord's authority. In Acts 2, 17 to 21, after Peter quoted from the Book of Joel, the people asked him in verse 37, Brothers, what shall we do?

Now Peter could have said to them, I've already told you what to do. Were you not listening to me? Rather, he had to explain to them what it meant.

Call, what it meant to call on the name of the Lord. Saying this in Acts 2 and 38, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are afar off, for all who will call on the name of the Lord.

[6 : 30] Now in the final chapters of Acts, the Acts of the Apostles, we find Paul traveling towards Rome. It's around AD 60 or thereabouts. The people of Rome, to whom Paul had written this letter, the letter of Romans, are struggling with life in the city.

They were Jews who had turned to Jesus, and who still continued to live in the same kind of Jewish neighborhoods. And you can imagine how difficult life would have been for them, living under the intense scrutiny of a people with whom they once shared a faith.

And Paul is writing to stiffen the resolve, to stay true to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in Romans chapter 10 and verse 12, Paul is quoting from Joel 2 and 32, encouraging them to remain true with the words, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Everyone who appeals to Christ. Have you appealed to Christ? Are you in this position that you want to appeal to Christ?

Lord, forgive me, for I am a sinner. Paul's desire was that all the people in Rome, I should say all the believers, those who had come to Christ in Rome, would fully understand the gospel.

[8 : 14] That they would not be swayed by other doctrines that were swimming about round about them. coming in among them as happened among those people in Galatia. I remember the Jews came in saying that they had to be circumcised, which was a Jewish right to gain salvation in their eyes.

People then and people now believe they can find their own way to heaven through good works, through ritual. But truthfully, this is so far from the case.

Many people believe that if they're good, they will automatically be rewarded with that place in heaven. And we know that there are many good and kind and gentle and generous people in this world.

But without faith, without that submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says that they are lost. Listen to what Sophia Loren, the actress, some of the younger people may not have heard of Sophia Loren, but she was a famous actress one day.

She's now 84. She was 84 last September. She was once described as an Italian goddess. This is what she said in an interview she gave in 1999.

[9 : 43] She says, I am not a practicing Christian, but I pray. I read the Bible. It's the most beautiful book ever written. I should go to heaven.

Otherwise, it's not nice. I haven't done anything wrong. My conscience is very clean. My soul is as white as these orchards over there. And I should go straight, straight to heaven.

Now, I don't know where she is with Christ these days. But none of us can gain any merit to get to be with the Lord forever unless we call on the name of the Lord and submit to him.

I don't know if you've heard of Robert Weber. He was an American theologian who died in 2007.

And in his final book, Who Gets to Narrate the World? When he's writing this book, he's dying with cancer. He dies just almost as soon as it is completed.

[10 : 52] And in the book, it describes the rise of early Christianity. In the context of a pagan Rome. And how a biblical worldview formed the foundations of a Western society.

And we have that, that Judeo-Christian worldview. And he tells in the book of a conversation that he had while traveling on a plane from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

And this is what he writes in the book. I was sitting next to the window, reading a Christian book. The man next to me, obviously from the Eastern Hemisphere, asked, Are you a religious man?

Well, yes, I said. I am too, he responded. We began talking about religion. In the middle of the conversation, I asked, Can you give me a one line that captures the essence of your faith?

Well, yes, he said. We are all part of the problem. And we are all part of the solution. After a while I said, Would you like a one liner that captures the Christian faith?

[12 : 01] Sure, he responded. We are all part of the problem. But there is only one man who is a solution. His name is, and every one of us could fill in the blank there, his name is Jesus.

This was a message that the citizens of Rome needed to embrace.

And the message that people everywhere need to embrace today, the solution to the world's woes, is Jesus. Gentiles, on the other hand, without any effort on their own part, have been accepted through God's grace.

Jews wanted to find another way. They insisted on gaining their own merit in their own terms and keeping the law rather than trust in the grace of the living God.

Reading from chapter 9 and verse 30, Paul is highlighting Israel's belief. And he says, What does all this mean? Even though the Gentiles are not trying to follow God's standards, they are made right with God.

[13 : 18] And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded.

Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of trusting him. And Paul warns the believers in Rome of erroneous teaching.

That anyone believing that they can earn their own way into heaven are mistaken. The New Living Translation puts it this way. They don't understand God's way of making people right with themselves.

Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. Well, there's man's way and there's God's way.

Man's way, it appears, is trying his very best to earn entry into heaven. Now, isn't that how we carry on in the world?

[14 : 27] We try to get everything that's good. We tell one another that we have to earn respect, that we earn rewards, that we earn promotions.

That's the way of the world. We may sing about the best things in life being free, but the truth about most human relationships and efforts is that the good stuff we have in the world has got to be earned in some way.

We were speaking about air miles or obvious points earlier on this afternoon. And if you have a credit card, you may earn some and be able to, or a Tesco card, I'm sure, you'll be able to get a holiday somewhere or something nice.

And some of us have had some nice holidays through Avios. But to get that, we need to have spent a huge amount of money to get a few points.

See, many people think in a similar way about heaven. If they do something, if they earn something, they'll get there. That the points they've earned will get them in.

[15 : 45] And my understanding of the Islamic faith is that they have this balance. If they do enough good, they'll get into heaven. So they want to weigh the balance in the right direction to gain entry.

They've been misled. Tragically. I mentioned this morning that in Gardens we supported missionaries, many missionaries.

And one couple with their three children went to Papua New Guinea to a tribe who knew absolutely nothing about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Incidentally, they came back with six children.

They were animist, not them, but the people they met, and worshipped their ancestors. There was conflict between them when they arrived and with neighboring tribes.

And the missionaries began by having a daily Bible reading or a daily Bible teaching. And the entire village would come and hear what they were seeing.

[16 : 53] Eventually, they were able to write the Bible or a good part of the New Testament in the people's language. But the missionaries began with the book of Genesis, with creation, and through the necessity of blood sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, right up to the time of Jesus.

And it was not months, it was years, a couple of years, maybe three years after they arrived there, they came to the crucifixion story. And men from the village were asked to reenact this story when the blood of Christ was shed on the cross.

And they understood in reenacting that story and all that they had learned that the blood was shed for the forgiveness of their sins.

And they saw hundreds of these tribes coming to Christ. And on that occasion, they all stood around and began shouting, it's true, it's true, it's true.

And apparently they kept this up for a couple of hours out of gratitude to what the Lord had shown them through these faithful missionaries. Jews, in Paul's day, believed that the only way to get to heaven was to observe the law, the Ten Commandments, and of course, the other 613 commandments that the Jews have.

[18 : 25] Now, as Paul says in Romans 10, they were good and earnest people. For I can testify about them that they are sellers for God, but their seal is not based on knowledge.

They have a misdirected enthusiasm for God. And that can infiltrate the Christian church as well.

There are people who will do everything they can with their own strength to do good things, to get to have a place in heaven, or by keeping man-made rules.

Oh, yes. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. No merit of my own, I claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground, not some other ground, but all other ground, is sinking sand.

[19 : 36] So, Paul is all out for the Jew. He's not against them. He's still a Jew himself. He doesn't change that. He's simply saying that their seal for obeying the law and for doing good works to gain heaven is misguided, misdirected.

And Romans 10 and 5, it says, Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law. The man who does these things will live by them.

Amen. And what Paul is saying here is that for a man, for a person to be right with God requires an obedience to all of the law's demands.

And you remember the story of the rich young ruler who thought he had kept all the law. And Paul is pointing to a simple truth. If you're going to try to get to heaven by being good, then you've got to be good in every moment of every day for the rest of your life.

Are you, am I good all the time? Do I not even have a bad thought sometimes? Well, I know I'm not good and I cannot depend on any goodness that there is in me to earn God's favor and I don't believe anyone else here can either.

[21 : 06] But Paul his heart desire was that his fellow Jews might be saved. And do we not say the same for the people in their own families who are not yet believers?

And the people of Scotland or wherever whatever nation we come from? Do we not desire that we see many coming to our saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. My heart and prayer to God for the Scots, for the English, for the Irish, for the Welsh, for the internationals that they may be saved.

For I can testify about them that their cell is for God but their seal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that come from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

And then Paul says, Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

[22 : 27] That is, Christ fulfilled the requirements the law demanded in a way that no one else could do it. Christ Jesus came into this earth to fulfill the law, then offered us righteousness through faith in him.

And this is a theme that runs throughout the book of Romans. And in the next few verses, Paul reflects on the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, of which obviously he's very learned, very knowledgeable.

even this chapter which we read together today, or tonight, has at least 12 Old Testament references.

So Paul was leaning on what he knew of God from the Old Testament, showing that the principle of faith is amply shown there. And when a Jewish person comes to Christ today, he sees the preciousness of what he learned under the old religion, when he sees the light of Christ.

Paul, first of all, deals with a negative side of attaining righteousness by calling, by citing Leviticus. Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by law.

[23 : 56] The man who does these things will live by them. The dark side of the picture here is that a curse rests on those who fail to meet the law's demands.

Living in this way that we can keep the law leads to self deception, leads to pride. I can do it. Orthodox Jews up to this very day are accused of this.

Ask others who trust in a man made God. And then Paul has a more positive approach. Again, quoting from the books of Moses, from Deuteronomy 30, as he considers a righteousness that is through faith.

Deuteronomy says, but the righteousness that is by faith says, do not say in your heart, and this is Paul quoting from Deuteronomy chapter 30, 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.

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. So Paul is recognizing that Christ is seen in the Old Testament.

[25 : 18] Another tough passage, but the context helps us, in that he seeks to speak about circumcised hearts, presupposing an attitude of loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than a legalistic attempt to righteousness.

The whole idea is that of doing God's will is not something that is too difficult or out of reach for us when our lives are attuned to God.

the mouth repeats God's word responding in prayer and praise and we've already done that here tonight. Out of the gratitude of our hearts we have sung praises to him here tonight because he has done great things for us and the heart is the source of our desire to please our Lord and our God.

But the righteousness that is by faith says do not say it in your heart you will ascend into heaven that is to bring Christ down. And Paul appeals to applies the reference to heaven here in verse six in order to emphasize certain aspects of the gospel.

There is no need for us to ascend to heaven to gain spiritual knowledge or acceptance for Christ has come down to earth from heaven to proclaim to give us salvation to give the world salvation.

[26 : 56] In verse seven Paul changes the figure from one of height to one of depth making the contrast with heaven sharper. And he says who will descend into the deep that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

Now the apostle the apostle's creed says that Christ descended into hell and that he was gloriously raised through being resurrected.

That means that our grasp of the righteousness of God with the son is the object of our faith and that's not difficult. We just have to trust to believe trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ that he died that he was raised that he ascended and that he will come again.

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 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.

So there's only one way to heaven and that's God's way. and it begins in the heart for it is with the heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

[28 : 27] The truth is we do not have to earn God's love because he has already given Jesus to show us love the fact we come to believe in our hearts.

You may have to earn mostly everything else in this life but you do not have to earn the love of God. You don't have to earn the joy and the peace of heaven.

That is a gift. The second part of that, the love of God is in your heart. But really it has to travel from our hearts to our lips.

And it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. So why is confessing with our mouth so important? Do we just accept God's love and leave it at that?

And thank you Lord for saving me and leave it at that. Is there any man here who hasn't told his wife or girlfriend that he loves her?

[29 : 45] Or is there any wife here who hasn't responded, I love you too, declaring your love? If you're married and on your wedding day did you not declare your love for your spouse in a public manner?

What you felt in your heart that day became public on your lips when you said I do? God doesn't look for perfect obedience to the law because he knows we cannot do it.

It's not within us to be able to do it. All God wants is our love in return in response to Christ's sacrifice.

God desires that we accept his love in Christ Jesus and so be filled with so much salvation joy that we cannot help but declare it to the world and tell everyone in whatever way we can that we love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. If you haven't already come to know the Lord Jesus Christ can I ask you one question just one will you put your hand in the hand of Jesus even tonight and if you have done so will you go and tell the world that you have put your hand in the hand of Jesus and that he is your saviour that he is your Lord.

[31 : 28] 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 the Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

God has done it all. We merely need to respond and receive God's wonderful gift by accepting God's promises or as Paul says to call on the name of the Lord Lord Jesus have mercy upon me a sinner.

Will you call on the name of the Lord Jesus not because of what you have done but because of what he has done appealing to him through his righteousness because you have done of your own that you may gain an entry into heaven and be with him for all of eternity there is no other way open to any of us but to call on the name of Jesus amen and may the Lord bless to us these few thoughts from his word let's bow our heads in prayer again father we thank you for the way that you work in our hearts that we will call out to you save me Lord Jesus and father if there is anyone in here tonight you know them that they may have already called these words out

Lord Jesus save me Lord take their hand take them to the places that you want to take them bless them and help them to be a blessing to the world in which you have taken them into let them be a blessing to their families to their friends to all those who they would meet and father give them strength to stand day by day proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord father we ask your blessing in all who are gathered here tonight and go with us as we leave to go to our respective homes in a short while with each one we pray in Jesus most precious name Amen