

Subject: Salvation by Faith in Christ

Scripture: Romans 10:1-13

For several weeks we have been looking at what the Bible teaches about the sovereignty of God in salvation. Now we are going to consider the other side of the coin, the privilege and responsibility of all people everywhere to believe in Christ and be saved. The Bible teaches both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man in salvation. In chapters 8-9, Paul has boldly revealed and defended God's sovereignty in salvation, but in the opening part of chapter 10, he describes his deep concern and prayers for the lost. Our belief in the sovereignty of God should never make us unconcerned about the lost, but rather it should cause us to pray and share the gospel. We know that God must save the lost, but we also know that He does so through our prayers and preaching of the Word.

1. THE PROBLEM OF MAN'S SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS (vs. 1-5)

About 25-30 years had passed between Christ's death and resurrection and the time when Paul wrote this letter to the Romans. During this time most Jews had not turned to Christ for salvation despite being God's chosen people and having special privilege and opportunity to know the truth about God and His Son Jesus. The Jews had zeal to serve and please God, but they lacked knowledge of how to do that. The problem was spiritual ignorance, and that had always been a problem for Israel.

Psalms 95:10 *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.*

Isaiah 1:2-3 ² *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.* ³ *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

Isaiah 5:13 *Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge.*

Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

Paul was burdened for his fellow Jews and prayed for their salvation. His strong belief in God's sovereignty did not make him cold and indifferent toward the lost. He cared deeply about those who were lost without Christ and bound for hell.

A. They were ignorant of God's righteousness (vs. 3)

The Jews made two mistakes. They underestimated God's righteousness and they overestimated their own righteousness. This was not an innocent ignorance, but a willful ignorance.

B. They attempted to establish their own righteousness (vs. 3)

They tried to establish their righteousness by keeping the law. There are only two kinds of righteousness: the kind we try to establish by our own good deeds or the kind that God gives.

Isaiah 64:6 *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

C. They did not submit themselves to God's righteousness (vs. 3)

They resisted and rejected the gospel of Christ and the free gift of righteousness in Him. The worst form of badness is human goodness when it becomes a substitute for the new birth. Whenever people don't submit to God and His way of salvation, it's a sign of one thing—pride. Here is the big difference between religion and salvation: religion produces pride and salvation produces humility.

D. God's righteousness is given to believers only through Christ (vs. 4)

God justifies those who believe in Christ. He imputes (credits) the righteousness of Christ to us.

Romans 5:1 *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

E. Righteousness by the law requires perfect obedience

The Jews attempted to be righteous by keeping the moral law, but that is humanly impossible. It was a double tragedy. First of all, they could not become righteous by striving to keep the law, but then second, they rejected the perfect righteousness they could have had by simply trusting in Christ. Someone wisely said: "The greatest tragedy in life is not what people suffer, but what they miss."

2. THE GIFT OF GOD'S PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS (vs. 6-13)

In this section Paul sets out God's simple plan of salvation by faith in Christ alone. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

A. Salvation by faith is not difficult or impossible (vs. 6-8)

To be saved doesn't require us to do something hard. We don't have to ascend into heaven or descend into the deep. Paul is drawing upon OT scripture in Deuteronomy 30:10-14. The OT law was not far off or hidden. God made it available for all His people. The same is true of the gospel.

We don't need to bring Christs down from heaven or bring Christ up from the grave. He has already come down from heaven in the incarnation and He has already come up from the grave in the resurrection. He's already done everything necessary to save us. That's good news.

B. Salvation by faith is both possible and personal (vs. 9-13)

Paul describes several things about genuine saving faith. There is a lot of misunderstanding about what faith is, so it's important to know what saving faith is and make sure we have it.

1) Saving faith is heart faith (vs. 9-10)

Righteousness has to do with what we become and salvation has to do with what we escape. By faith God declares that we are righteous in His sight, and by faith we are rescued from the wages of sin, which is eternal punishment in hell.

2) Saving faith is confirmed by mouth confession (vs. 9-10)

To confess literally means to say the same thing or to agree with what God says. This is our public testimony of faith and confirms the faith in our heart.

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

3) Saving faith is never disappointed but always fulfilled (vs. 11)

Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:16, which he also quoted in Romans 9:33.

4) Saving faith is for all people everywhere (vs. 12)

OT saints were saved by faith and NT saints are saved by faith. Jews and Gentiles are saved by faith. Every person must be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone or he will never be saved at all.

5) Saving faith rests in the person and work of Christ (vs. 13)

Faith is important because it connects us to Christ. It is not enough to have faith or be “a person of faith.” We must have faith in Christ. We must place our faith where God placed our sins. Salvation is not in the power of faith, but in the power of Christ. The name of Christ stands for who He is and what He does.

Acts 4:12 *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Paul quotes again from the OT, this time from the prophet Joel (Joel 2:32), which Peter also quoted in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:21).

Just as God sovereignly chooses and calls all believers to Himself, all believers must choose Christ and call upon Him in faith.