

# **Romans: The Good News of God**

## **Salvation and Confession**

*Romans 10:5-13*

**Rev. Freddy Fritz**

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# Salvation and Confession

## Scripture

We are in Romans 10. In this chapter the Apostle Paul describes the way of salvation from the human perspective. He unfolds for us what our role is in terms of receiving the gift of salvation. Let's read Romans 10:5-13 and see what he says:

**<sup>5</sup>For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. <sup>6</sup>But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup>or “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup>But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup>For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:5-13)**

## Introduction

Romans, “that noblest sermon of grace,” as one Bible commentator has put it, has been thought difficult and not suitable for Sunday morning's ministry of the Word. The “bad reputation” of the letter is, however, refuted by two facts.

In the first place, the apostle did not write for scholars, as some have surmised. He wrote for common people, as a quick scan of Romans 16 will confirm. Paul wrote theology that *all* could un-

derstand, for not many wise according to the world were found in the early churches (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26).

And, in the second place, it is not strictly speaking correct to say that the modern churchgoer is simple-minded. It is true that the evangelical church is overrun with superficial and shallow literature, as a trip to the local Christian bookstore will confirm. And yet, in spite of this, many Christians are longing to find and read more substantial material. In fact, at the same time that we are deluged with simplistic literature there is also a revival of the reading of Puritan theology and of the writings of other more recent Reformed authors.

The problem that people have with Romans is related, not to its form, but to its content. When people go to church, they expect to hear sermons on *morality*, but Paul preaches *grace*. The change of subject matter is so startling that many become confused. It is not surprising to hear it said after a sermon on grace, “That was over my head.” The subject of grace is incompatible with the mindset of many, and they are inclined to blame their failure to pay attention to the message on the difficulty of the topic or the dullness of the speaker. Morality they understand; grace they do not.

It is the duty of every preacher of grace to cut away the undergrowth of morality that inevitably gathers around sound gospel preaching in order that the pure grace of the gospel may be seen. That is one of the chief reasons why I so often expose the unbiblical notion of human free will. I want to clear away the things that hinder you from gazing upon grace, and in this I stand in the steps of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Whitefield, the Hodges, Warfield, and many others.

### **Lesson**

In the preceding context of today’s text the failure of the Israelites from the human side has been emphasized, for the divine side of things was handled in Romans 9. Paul traces the failure of the Israelites in Romans 9 to the pride of self-righteousness (cf. v.

3) and unbelief (cf. 9:32-33; 10:4). The root of both is a failure to hear the word of God, to heed the exhortation in the stanza we often sing,

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.*

## I. The Righteousness of the Law (10:5)

The apostle begins his exposition of this section by commenting on the righteousness of the law in verse 5, **“For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.”**

What Paul says, very simply, is that there is a righteousness set forth in the law, but it is a righteousness of human works (cf. Philippians 3:9). Ideally, or hypothetically, it might be possible for a person to attain to righteousness by the law. Of course, that is impossible because of the fall. Only Jesus Christ has ever fully obeyed the law of God.

But hypothetically, and I emphasize the word “hypothetically,” the law sets out a legal righteousness. In other words, if a person from the moment he draws his first breath to the moment he draws his last should live in perfect obedience to the law, then he might claim heaven by works.

That seems to be the point of our Lord’s encounter with the lawyer, who came to Jesus asking, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). He evidently thought that life might be gained by some outstanding benevolent act.

The Lord, however, directed him to the Scriptures, saying, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (10:26).

The young man replied: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (10:27).

Jesus replied, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live” (10:28).

Jesus made an important change in the lawyer's words, however. The lawyer had said, "What must I do," using the (aorist) tense of the word, "do," suggesting an isolated act, such as a magnificent expression of goodness in some deed of kindness. Jesus, however, uses the present tense of the word, "do." The tense is usually durative, or linear, in force.

Jesus intended to say to the lawyer that if he continually did what the law demanded throughout his life, then he would live. Thus, the legal way to life is by 100% holiness in deed and word throughout one's lifetime, a standard too high for sinful people. As the verse has it,

*Run, John, and live, the law commands,  
But gives me neither legs nor hands;  
Yet better news the Gospel brings,  
It bids me fly and gives me wings.*

The law was given to bring people to the knowledge of their sin, and it performs that work admirably, when one seriously considers what it is saying. As a result no one is able to stand and testify that they have obeyed God's law during their lifetime perfectly.

Several weeks ago I suggested that anyone in this congregation could publicly confess his or her perfection in the worship service, but no one stood up to do so.

There is a story, however, of a man who did respond to such an invitation by a preacher. When the preacher asked if anyone in the congregation would like to stand and confess a perfection of life, a man stood somewhat hesitantly to the surprise of the preacher, who asked, "Are you standing to tell us that you have lived a perfect life?"

The man replied, "Well, no, but I would like to put in a word for my wife's first husband!"

I am sure, however, that upon closer inspection even that first husband would be found to have broken God's law. The point is that no-one is able to obey God's law perfectly.

## II. The Righteousness of Faith (10:6-10)

Paul talks next of the righteousness that is by faith.

### A. *Its Old Testament expression (10:6-8)*

In the next few sentences the apostle, leaning rhetorically on Deuteronomy 30:10-14, points out that the Scriptures teach a righteousness by means of faith.

In the context of Deuteronomy Moses is setting forth details of a Palestinian Covenant, a covenant that regulated Israel's enjoyment of the land that had been promised to her by the Abrahamic Covenant.

In essence Moses said that if Israel kept the Lord's commands (note the plural) and if they turned to the Lord with all their heart (note the singular nature of this command), then they would enjoy the possession of the land. If they were disobedient, then they would be scattered to the four corners of the earth.

In Deuteronomy 30:10-14 Moses writes:

When you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

All that Moses is saying in his own rhetorical way is that grace is near in the Old Testament, and that it is not the product of large physical endeavors. Grace comes through a simple inclining

of the heart toward the Lord, the act of faith.

The apostle in Romans 10:6, trading on that rhetorical expression of the simple nature of faith, and that it is not a matter of works by which we obtain God's blessings, writes, **“Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down).”** What Paul suggests is that we do not have to precipitate the incarnation. The divine act has already occurred. He has come, and not as a reward for human works, but in sheer grace.

The next sentence, **“Or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)”** (10:7), points to another impossibility. He, the Messiah Christ, has already risen (cf. Matthew 28:6; John 16:10).

Thus, Paul says, salvation is not by human merit (10:6), nor by any human supplement of the work of God (10:7). It is not something *attained*, but something *obtained*. What is needed is not a new start in the attempt to provide ourselves with a robe of righteousness, but a new heart by regeneration.

Obtaining a new heart by regeneration is an immediate possibility, for **“the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”** (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)” (10:8). God seeks faith alone, and he provides it too (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9).

#### *B. Its New Testament expression (10:9-10)*

The apostle explains the nature of the word of faith in its New Testament expression in Romans 10:9-10. It consists in the confession of Jesus as Lord and his resurrection, a confession that arises out of a heart of faith: **“Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”**

Paul refers first to the confession of Jesus as Lord, and then he follows that with a reference to faith in his resurrection.

Now it should be pointed out that Paul is not speaking of two

unrelated matters, when he speaks of confession and belief. One is the outward side of things and the effect of the other. Faith is the inward side of the matter and is the cause of the confession. One commentator says, “And yet the two are one; for confession without belief is either self-deception or hypocrisy, while trust without confession may be cowardice.”

In confessing Jesus as Lord one confesses the divine nature and attributes in him. It is a confession which can only be made by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3), which indicates in an incidental way that faith is the gift of God.

One sees a beautiful illustration of this at the Last Supper, when the apostles, Judas excepted, referred to him as Lord, while the betrayer could only muster up a “Master” (cf. Matthew 26:20-25).

The second article of the faith, namely, that Jesus has been raised from the dead is an important corrective for those who use the term “Lord” too broadly (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5). There is “one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:6), who has been raised from the dead. All other “lords” are not lords at all.

The Christian faith is not one among many, as Peter puts in so plainly in Acts 4:12. Salvation is only through Christ, “for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

And the Lord Jesus affirms the same thing with his statement in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

It is not true that we are all going to heaven, but by different roads, some by works and some by grace through Christ. Christianity is an exclusive truth.

It is inexcusable for a Christian preacher of the gospel, knowing that salvation is only through Jesus Christ, to fail to preach that truth. “Do be generous” may be the comment of those who think that an exclusive system of truth is bigoted, or arrogant, but the charge should be laid at the feet of our Lord, for he is its author.



The fact that Jesus is Lord and has been raised from the dead is an affirmation that he stands both within history and outside history, and not merely as a teacher, but as the conqueror of death. As he said in his encounter with Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26). He is the Lord of life and death.

Lord Byron, the profligate poet, once said, “If ever man was God, or God was man, Jesus Christ was both.”

There is a story of C. K. Lee, a Chinese Christian who came to this country some years ago, which illustrates the necessity of Christ for our salvation. He gave a message in a rather liberal church in California and was asked at the conclusion, “Why should we send Christianity to China, when the Chinese have Confucianism?”

He replied, “There are three reasons. First, Confucius was a teacher and Christ a Savior. China needs a Savior more than a teacher. Second, Confucius is dead and Christ is alive. China needs a living Savior. And, finally, Confucius is one day going to be judged by Jesus Christ, and China needs to know Christ as Savior before she meets him as judge.” That was well put.

As Paul summarizes: **“For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved”** (10:10).

### **III. Paul’s Conclusion: Universality, Sufficiency, and Accessibility (10:11-12)**

Paul then makes three conclusions regarding the gospel. The gospel is universal, sufficient, and accessible.

#### *A. The universality of the gospel (10:11)*

First, Paul affirms the universality of the gospel in verse 11: **“Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”** The

gospel is available to *all*.

*B. The sufficiency of the gospel (10:12)*

Second, Paul affirms the sufficiency of the gospel in verse 12: **“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.”** The gospel is able to save Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, black or white, educated or uneducated.

*C. The accessibility of the gospel (10:13)*

And third, Paul affirms the accessibility of the gospel in verse 13: **“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”**

The gospel is accessible to all who call upon the Lord. Can anything be simpler? Incidentally, Bible students have noted that three times Abraham is said to have called upon the Lord. It is significant that on each occasion he is standing at an altar upon which blood sacrifices were placed. It suggests to us that the only basis upon which we may call upon the Lord is that of the blood sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross of Calvary.

Of course, when Paul mentions that we may be saved by “calling upon” the Lord, he means a true calling upon him for personal salvation from sin, guilt, and condemnation. The calling upon the Lord is the expression of true faith in him, for faith and prayer are cognate acts. And in that act of calling upon him we affirm his deity, too, for only a deity can save us.

## Conclusion

An article in the November 1987 *Reader’s Digest* was about “enhanced 911,” an important addition to the emergency telephone call program. Where this system is in operation, a person who dials

911 doesn't have to tell the operator his location. His name, address, and phone number appears immediately on the operator's screen.

"Enhanced 911" has been a dramatic success. For example, a 6-year-old boy called 911 to report that his house was on fire. Even while the operator was telling the frightened boy what to do, fire equipment was being sent.

A terrified girl called to say that a man was trying to break into her home. Within 3 minutes an arrest was being made and the child was safe.

And in another city, a girl whispered to a 911 operator that a man was hurting her mother, and then hung up. Police arrived in time to capture the rapist.

God, however, has the best 911 program. For the Bible assures that **"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

I trust that everyone in this room will believe the word of God and call on the name of the Lord for salvation. Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*Answers for Life!*

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: [Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org](mailto:Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

Web site: [www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org](http://www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

**PRAAYER:**

Taken from Ray Ortland's *A Passion for God*:

O Lord God, your gospel is not as simple as some people would have us think, but neither is it as burdensome as others would have us undertake. We see that we cannot take Jesus as our Savior without also bowing before him as our Lord. And we also see that we cannot retain any lingering confidence in our own capacity for satisfying the demands of your law. Jesus is Lord. Let us never stop short of him. Jesus is Savior. Let us never go beyond him. Let us never trivialize the Son of God, one way or the other. Let us never send others down the wrong path as well. O God, let us be true to your gospel. Let us see your salvation. And let us bring many others along with us to a saving faith in Christ.

And all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

As you leave here today, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.