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Romans

...that 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. Romans 10:9

From time to time, this devotional recommends committing a verse to memory. There are a couple specific verses in chapter 10; this is one of them. By memorizing, contemplating, and understanding Romans 10:9, one can keep from muddying the waters of one's theology. It is simple, concise, and speaks to the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ.

"That" is a conjunction being used to tie together with the thought in the preceding verse, "the word of faith." This "word of faith" is explained by Paul and is what he preached. It is the means of obtaining "the righteousness of faith" mentioned in verse 6.

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus..." Confession is more than the audible words which occur with the mouth. To "confess" is synonymous with to "profess." One can confess a lie; one only professes the truth. The word is homologēsēs and the concept of agreement is to be found within it. The audible confession stands because of the inward profession. This is why Paul says that "the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." It is as close to us as the air which enters and exits our mouth and fills our lungs, and it is both audible in tone and truthful to the heart.

The reason for the audible profession is obvious. No one would hide their true belief in the Lordship of Jesus. If He is in fact Lord, then He is alive. If He is alive, then He triumphed over the cross. If He did this, then He was without sin because "the wages of sin is death." If He is without sin, then He is God because "all have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God."

As you can see by logically thinking this through, the incarnation of Jesus Christ - being the God/Man - is inextricably tied up in the confession of "the Lord Jesus." One cannot deny His lordship, meaning His deity, and be saved. This is the heart of what God has done in the stream of time for the redemption of mankind.

Therefore, confession "with your mouth" is the making of an open-profession that Jesus is God, thus denying all other gods. This would have been particularly of note in Roman times when people within the empire were required to affirm the lordship of Caesar. For many, it was a life and death decision to call Jesus "Lord." Most translations, rather than stating "the Lord Jesus" will say "Jesus is Lord." This is to avoid confusion and to emphasize His Lordship.

Either way, one must make the confession which is a true profession as is seen in the words "and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead." Paul directly ties the resurrection to Jesus' lordship. One cannot honestly call on a dead savior and so acknowledging His resurrection returns us to the thought that He was sinless in His life and death. Peter explains this in his great discourse at Pentecost in Acts 2 -

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." (22-24)

It was "not possible" that death should hold Jesus because He was without sin, and death is the penalty for sin. To ensure we don't miss the point, immediately before and after stating this, Peter turned to Scripture and spoke of the Lord (Jehovah) in a way which implied that Jesus is Jehovah. Therefore, calling on Jesus is calling on Jehovah, but the reciprocal is not necessarily true. If one accepts the premise that Jehovah of the Old Testament is realized in Jesus of the New, then they have rightly called on the name of the Lord. But if they stubbornly refuse to see what God has done through Jesus, fulfilling the Old Testament pictures related to Jehovah which pointed to Him, then they have not called on the Lord Jesus. It is an important point which should not be missed.

And so, this belief in God's raising Jesus from the dead is the crucial key to understanding His Personhood. It is a volitional act of the free-will, which itself is a gift of God. Faith isn't something which can be earned; it is something which is received from God and then exercised by man. This doesn't mean God grants us the faith to believe and we will believe. It means that God grants us the faith to believe and we may believe.

This is no different than God granting us the ability to accomplish mathematical skills. We may choose to use this ability or not. Maybe a better example would be the ability to swim. Swimming is possible for any normally constructed person, but it does take a step of faith to actually exercise the ability. The ability is given by God, but it doesn't mean that the choice will be exercised. Faith is not earned, it is received, and then it must be put into practice. Once the faith is properly applied, "you will be saved."

This final thought, being saved, implies that there is something to be "saved" from. Jesus explains this in John 3:18 -

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Salvation is necessary to be kept from condemnation. Condemnation is the result of inherited (and later committed) sin. Sin is what separates us from God; faith in Jesus' work is what reconciles us. This is why Jesus could rightly claim that "No one comes to the Father except through me." He is the only avenue to be reconciled to our heavenly Father.

Life application: We are given a choice, believe in Jesus and be saved, or be condemned. There is no other avenue. Believe and be saved.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Romans 10:10

Paul connects 10:9 to 10:10 with his common conjunction "for." In 10:9 he explained what was required to be saved - 1) confession with the mouth and 2) belief in the heart. Now he explains why this is so -

1) With the heart one believes unto righteousness - Belief is what justifies. This is a consistent and common teaching of Paul. Faith in God's provision results in the declaration of righteousness; one is found "not guilty" before the law. This occurs the moment one believes and no further act "fulfills" this standing before God (as is supposed in the teaching of N.T. Wright). Paul speaks of this justification as immediate, complete, and assured in Ephesians 1:13, 14 -

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

It is immediate because faith results in sealing; no delay can be inferred. It is complete because God has sealed the believer with His Spirit. Nothing could be more comprehensive than this. And it is assured because this sealing is referred to as a "guarantee." As this is God's plan to reconcile men to Himself, it would make

no sense to justify a sinner through pardoning of sin just to turn around and later "un-justify" him for a later failing.

God doesn't make mistakes and His sealing is eternal. Likewise, the plan has been given and it is one which is fully satisfactory. Because it is, no other method is necessary or provided. Justification comes through Christ and Christ alone. God will not deviate from this avenue, nor will He make exceptions along the way.

2) With the mouth confession is made unto salvation - Belief results in righteousness and it precedes confession. As noted in the commentary on 10:9, the audible confession stands because of the inward profession. Anyone can confess a matter without believing it. We see this in our politicians daily. However, when the heart believes, the confession will be sincere. For God "who searches the hearts and minds" knowing the difference is not a difficult task. Morison states it this way, "Confession is just faith turned from its obverse side to its reverse ... When faith comes forth from its silence to announce itself, and to proclaim the glory and the grace of the Lord, its voice is confession."

Life application: No city on a hill can be hid and no true faith will be silent. Belief will naturally result in confession. Let your words be overflowing with gratitude to the Lord who saved you despite yourself, and do not quench the Spirit with whom God has sealed you. Be bold and proclaim the Lord Jesus every chance you get.

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Romans 10:11

Paul again quotes Isaiah 28:16 as he did in Romans 9:33. His citation is using the Greek translation of this verse and adding the term "whoever." Along with Isaiah 28 though, Isaiah 49:23 carries a similar thought -

"Then you will know that I am the Lord,
For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."

In this verse, it is Lord (Jehovah) speaking. Paul's use of verses in this manner, as with the other apostles, is to show that Jesus is, in fact, Jehovah. He is the physical incarnation of Jehovah of the Old Testament. How so many people miss this is hard to understand, but miss it they do and they fail to accept God at His word.

Also, in citing the Old Testament in this manner, it demonstrates, quite clearly, that salvation by faith was anticipated even under the law. Paul has just gotten done with explaining "how" to be saved and then he cites this verse from under the time of the law to say that this "how" will not lead to disappointment. The reciprocal is also true - failing to seek justification by faith alone will lead to being "put to shame."

Life application: Go back, read, and memorize Romans 10:9, 10. Then trust that what it says is true. In so doing, you also will not be put to shame. Then, go share this simple message of hope with others.