

Confess and Believe: Romans 10:5-13

Ben Reaoch, Three Rivers Grace Church

Sunday, January 26, 2014

Some of you are familiar with the Gospel outline known as the “Romans Road.” Romans certainly is a great part of Scripture to use in explaining the heart of the Christian faith. We can begin in Romans 3:23, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” Romans 6:23 adds that “*the wages of sin is death . . .*” This is what we need to be saved from. The Good News is that “*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,*” as it says in Romans 5:8. And then we come to the important words which are part of our text for this morning, in Romans 10:9-10: “*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. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*”

This collection of verses really does capture the central message of Christianity. God is glorious and holy and righteous. We, as sinful human beings, have fallen short of the glory of God, and therefore deserve eternal death. But God sent His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place. And all those who confess Him and believe in Him will be saved. If you, this morning, are putting your trust in Christ’s death for you, and you believe that Christ triumphed over sin and death by rising from the dead, then you have nothing to fear. You will not experience shame on the last day, but riches. This is the Good News that gives us hope. And it’s the Good News that binds us together as a church. We want to be inspired by this Good News week after week when we’re together, so that in our individual lives we can continue to be filled with hope throughout the week, even as trials and temptations come our way.

So let’s do this again this morning. Let’s look at the beautiful Gospel message in this next set of verses in Romans 10. First we’ll see the contrast between *law and faith* in verses 5-8. Second we’ll talk about the call to *confess and believe* in verses 9-10. Third, we’ll look at the contrast between *shame and riches* in verses 11-13.

Law vs. Faith (verses 5-8)

Remember the huge statement Paul made in Romans 10:4. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” It’s hard to overestimate the significance of that

statement, especially if we put ourselves in the shoes of the Israelites. The law was their lives. Everything they did revolved around the precious law that Yahweh had given to them. The problem was that they had turned it into a prideful means of trying to establish their own righteousness. That is tragically naïve, foolish, and arrogant. As it says in Romans 9:31, “Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.” They viewed the law in the wrong way. Rather than seeing their own sin and how they fall short of the law, they viewed it as a way to meet the requirements of the law and earn God’s favor. That’s what 10:3 says, “being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”

This is the sad predicament of unbelieving Israel. And it’s the sad predicament of many churchgoers as well. But Christianity is not about making yourself good enough for God. It’s about trusting in Christ to save you.

I imagine there may be many here who struggle often with feeling like you just don’t measure up. And that gets you depressed, because you feel expectations pressing in on you from all directions. You have your own expectations for yourself. And then there are the expectations you feel from your family, your friends, your church, and God. And you just feel pressed down by those expectations (whether the expectations are real or just perceived). You often have that sinking feeling inside of you that you just aren’t measuring up. Sometimes that feeling makes you try harder to please your friends and family, and you try harder to do things at church and you try harder to please God with your life. Other times that feeling makes you want to curl up under the covers and just escape from the world. Or you want to eat a half a pan of brownies, because it will just make you feel better. Or you turn to some other pleasurable, but harmful behaviors, because you crave something (anything) that will get you out from under that pressure you feel.

Could I suggest that those feelings may be connected with a mindset very similar to what Paul is describing here? Of course, theologically, you would deny the idea of works righteousness. We can’t earn our salvation. But functionally, how many of us are caught in that very trap? We feel like, to be a good Christian, I need to be doing this and that and the other thing. And to be a good church member, there is this list of duties. And to be a good spouse, parent, friend, employee . . . the list of requirements

snowball. And it leaves us either prideful, because we think we're doing pretty well, or devastated, because we just keep falling short.

I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, stop trying to be good enough. Think how that might revolutionize your life this week. Stop living under the burden of so many expectations, thinking that your identity and self-worth are tied up in how many people are pleased with you. Stop trying to fulfill all the necessary requirements (whatever those look in your own mind). Instead, submit yourself to God's righteousness which comes to us in Christ. Bask in the wonder of Christ's perfection covering you. If you are in Christ, then God is not angry with you. He is not looking down His nose at you, marking down demerits every time you miss your personal devotions. If you are in Christ, then God sees you as clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He sees you as spotless and perfect.

Now, this message is easily misunderstood. Paul had to clarify this message. This is not a license to sin. If you are a true believer, then you will have a desire to obey, because you'll come to discover that obedience is the pathway to greatest joy.

But here's the point I hope will encourage you today. The quality of your obedience has no bearing on your standing with God. God loves you and is pleased with you and is bestowing blessings upon you and has promised eternal riches to you, because of Christ's righteousness.

So drop that heavy weight of feeling like you have to measure up. This week meditate on the fact that you are righteous in Christ. There's no way you can make yourself more accepted. Thank God for this. Thank Him for His Son. And humble yourself to receive His righteousness.

The contrast between works righteousness and righteousness by faith continues in Romans 10:5-8. These are really interesting verses, because Paul quotes from two passages, both in the Pentateuch (one from Leviticus and the other from Deuteronomy), and he uses those two passages to contrast righteousness based on law and righteousness based on faith.

The first quotation is from Leviticus 18:5, "the person who does the commandments will live by them." Now, Paul's quotation of this text does not imply that God was actually encouraging the Israelites to pursue works righteousness. Rather, what Paul is picking up on is simply the idea of obedience, and reward for obedience. Leviticus 18:5 represents an important principle in the law, namely, that obedience is rewarded with life.

The problem after the Fall, however, is that nobody can obey as they ought. This is the crucial point Paul's fellow Jews have missed. The law principle contained in the Mosaic covenant, accompanied as it was with the sacrificial system, would have pointed Israel toward a substitute. The remnant of believing Israel would have trusted in God to cover their sins. But for the reprobate within Israel, they turned this law principle into a prideful attempt to make themselves righteous. And it seems that Paul uses Leviticus 18:5 as a way of summarizing that mentality. We can see this in Galatians 3:12, another place where he quotes this verse. "*But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."*" This is how Paul summarizes works righteousness as well in Romans 10:5.

In Romans 10:6-8, then, he describes the opposite: righteousness based on faith. Interestingly, he quotes again from Moses, this time from the book of Deuteronomy. It's fascinating to see the Christological way in which Paul adapts this text. And I think what he's showing us here is the reality of Romans 10:4, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Let me read for you Deuteronomy 30:11-14, and then we'll look at what Paul leaves out and what he adds.

"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."
(Deuteronomy 30:11-14, ESV)

The first thing to notice in Paul's quotation is that he's actually combining two different passages from Deuteronomy. That first phrase, "Do not say in your heart . . ." is not from Deuteronomy 30, but from Deuteronomy 9. Listen to what it says there.

"Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the

word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 9:4–5, ESV)

God is bringing you into the Promised Land, not because of your righteousness. Remember that. Don’t be tempted to say in your heart, “It’s because of my righteousness . . .” In the following verses of Deuteronomy 9, God reminds them of the golden calf incident. They need to remember how rebellious they have been.

It would be good for us to remember this, too. We have rebelled. We have been stubborn and disobedient. Anytime we’re tempted to feel self-righteous, we should call this to mind. Don’t say in your heart, It’s because of my righteousness that God is blessing me. No. God is being faithful to His gracious promises, and He it is sheer grace that I receive any good thing from Him.

Paul weaves these two passages together, showing that he has the wider context of Deuteronomy in mind. We must look away from any righteousness of our own, and look to the righteousness of Another.

Lest we stumble over those phrases in chapter 30 that the commandment is not too hard for you, and you can do it, I’ll point out that earlier in that chapter there is the promise that “the Lord your God will circumcise your heart . . .” (30:6). Earlier in the book there was a command to circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn (10:16). It’s only after the promise that God is going to do that heart work within them, that there is then the promise that you can do this.

But for Paul’s purposes, he wants to draw out a very profound point that Christ has accomplished the commandment. In Paul’s quotation, he puts Christ in the place of the commandment. Did you notice that? First of all, he omits the phrases about hearing the commandment and doing it, and being able to do it. And secondly, he adds these explanatory phrases (which are in parentheses in our translations). But instead of referring to the commandment, which is the reference in Deuteronomy 30, Paul speaks of Christ. It seems he’s wanting to show us, in this creative and vivid way, that Christ is the end of the law.

How is this comforting to us? Well, it’s comforting to us because Christ is near to us. We don’t have to go far in search of a Savior. He has already come to earth in His incarnation. And He has risen from the dead on the third day following His death on the cross. He has done it. We don’t need to run and strive to find Him. He has accomplished it all, and the news of it has reached

our ears. As verse 8 says, ““The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim).”

Believe! Don't work. Trust in this message of hope. There is the gift of salvation to be received by faith. And listen carefully, friends, because this message which is near to you this day, will not always be near to you. Consider what an opportunity you have today to be hearing these things about Jesus Christ. If you are not trusting in Jesus, but you think that you'll do something about that later in life, beware! Don't squander this opportunity. The window of opportunity will not be open forever. The word is very near you right this moment. Don't wait another day.

Listen to these words from Isaiah 55:6-7. ““*Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*”

What a wonderful day this is, as the Gospel is being unfolded from the Scriptures. You may not have another day. Don't put this off. Respond to this call today, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Confess and Believe (verses 9-10)

In the next verses we see some of what this entails: to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. These verses don't tell us everything about what's involved in become a Christian. But we do have a couple of essential things here. Paul still has in the mind the language from Deuteronomy 30, where verse 14 said, the commandment “is in your mouth and in your heart . . .” So Paul speaks of the mouth and the heart. He refers to confessing with your mouth and believing in your heart. And because he's carrying over those words from Deuteronomy, we shouldn't overanalyze his statements about what happens with the heart and what happens with the mouth. He's speaking about one reality, which he refers to in verse 10 as both justification and salvation. He's talking about entering into a right relationship with God. And in what way can that happen? By faith.

The main focus here is on faith / belief / trust. This has been the main point in contrast to works righteousness. But here we can see some helpful things that detail some of the content of this faith. Plenty of people talk about faith. Almost anyone you talk to might affirm that they have faith. But the all-important question is, “Faith in what?”

Well, one essential component of Christian faith is the affirmation of Jesus as Lord. That is no small thing to affirm. Jesus Christ is one with Yahweh. Jesus is God! The Old Testament quotations in verse 11 and 13, in their original context are referring to Yahweh. Paul uses them to speak of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, and whoever calls upon Him will be saved.

Do you confess that Jesus is Lord? Do you affirm that He is Lord of all? More personally, do you affirm that He is Lord of your life, and do you submit to Him as your Master? Some people have the idea that it's possible to receive Jesus as Savior without submitting to Him as Lord. But the Bible will not permit us to talk in that way. This verse is clear enough. To be saved, you must confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

Let me also say something about this idea of confessing. We think of confessing our sins, which the Bible calls us to do. We are to make known our sins to other believers and to God, and that is tied with repentance. But this is a different kind of confession. We might more commonly refer to this as a profession. What we are making known is our affirmation of certain truths and our allegiance to Christ.

In what ways, as believers, do we confess with our mouths what we believe and who we believe in? Corporate worship is one way that we do this. We sing out loud, affirming Gospel truth and praising God for our salvation. Another very meaningful profession of faith happens at baptism, which is a public way of identifying with Christ. What about at other times? Do you speak often of Christ in your home? Do you confess with your mouth truths about who Christ is and your relationship with Him? Do you speak to your family members about Christ? What about in the workplace or in your neighborhood? Have those around you ever heard you utter the words, "Jesus Christ"? Have they heard you testify of your relationship with Him? Do you look for opportunities to make known your faith in Him? Remember Paul's words back in Romans 1, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes . . ." Don't be ashamed of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Don't cower in fear because you're worried about what people will think of you. Be sensitive. Be discerning about the appropriate times and contexts. Be praying and be attentive to seize on those timely opportunities to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

"and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead." Paul also highlights the importance of the resurrection here. We certainly think of Christ's sacrificial death for us. And the resurrection is what proves the efficacy of His death. The death

accomplished its aim, and we know that because Christ did not remain in the grave defeated by death. He came out of the grave as the victor over death.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:17, “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” So the resurrection is not up for debate. It’s not an optional doctrine of the Christian faith. It is absolutely essential. And it’s something that gives us great hope and peace. Jesus Christ took the punishment that we deserve, and He paid it to the full. There’s no punishment left for us. We are free. Jesus walked into the storm of God’s wrath, so that we can dwell in the peaceful presence of God’s approval and receive the riches of His blessings.

Eric Liddell was famous as an athlete. He was an amazing runner. He won the 400 meters in the summer Olympics in Paris in 1924. He was a Scotsman, but was born in China because his parents were missionaries there. And Eric followed in their footsteps, returning to China to be a missionary himself. At some point he was asked if he regretted leaving the fame of athletics to be a missionary. He said, "It's natural for a chap to think over all that sometimes, but I'm glad I'm at the work I'm engaged in now. A fellow's life counts for far more at this than the other."¹

What may be lesser known about Eric Liddell’s life is that he died in an internment camp in China in 1945. He was serving in a dangerous area where, at that time, the Chinese and Japanese were in conflict. Things got so bad that he and his wife decided it would be best for her and the children to leave China, which they did. The plan was for them to be reunited when the war ended. But in 1943 Eric and many other foreigners were detained by the Japanese in an internment camp. Some who survived the time in that camp tell of Eric’s kindness and sacrifice for others. He taught Bible lessons and taught science to the children. He planned games and activities. His health started to decline, though, and he thought it was due to exhaustion. It turned out to be a large brain tumor which caused his death. He died on February 21, 1945, just five months before those in the camp were released.

A surprising revelation was made at the Olympics in China just a few years ago in 2008. Officials disclosed some details from that camp that had not been public knowledge before. Apparently Winston Churchill had arranged a prisoner exchange with Japan that would have freed Eric Liddell. But Eric chose to let a pregnant woman go in his place. He stayed, and died, so that she and her baby could go free.

¹ Wikipedia, “Eric Liddell.”

What a great Gospel picture that is—of sacrifice and free grace. Jesus Christ submitted Himself to suffering and torture and death. And those who trust in Him walk free. Jesus accepted shame, so that we can be showered with His riches.

Shame vs. Riches (verses 11-13)

This is what I want to close with briefly in verses 11-13. Verse 11 says that “everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” And verse 12 says that He bestows His riches on all who call on Him. Here is the outcome of trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. At the end of this age, when everyone will face judgment, those who belong to Christ will have no shame. Think about this, brothers and sisters. Think about the shame you feel in this life. Maybe it’s associated with feeling like you don’t measure up, like I was talking about at the beginning of this sermon. You feel worthless, even shameful, because you can never live up to the expectations you feel from others. Maybe you feel ashamed because of sins in your past, or sins that continue to wreak havoc in your life. Those deep, dark secrets that you don’t want to let anyone know about.

Listen to this: Jesus bore our shame. He died the most shameful death imaginable, hanging naked on a cross. So whatever shame you feel due to sin . . . it is gone. Christ has taken it. And on the judgment day there will be no shame for you. Instead, there will be riches of blessing that will extend to eternity.

Let this be a warning as well, to anyone who is not in Christ. If you are an unbeliever, and you don’t feel any shame, you need to know that there will come a day when you will be made to feel the weight of your shameful deeds, and you will never escape that shame. You may feel no shame right now. You may celebrate sinful behavior which you should be ashamed of, but are not. In Philippians 3 Paul writes about those who are enemies of the cross. “Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.” Those who continue down that path will experience tremendous shame on judgment day. They will be cast into hell where they will be shamed forever.

Don’t revel in shameful deeds. Repent and believe in the One who bore our shame and earned for us a great reward. Think of the riches of belonging to Jesus Christ. Even now in this life, we know that all things are working together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. And we know that in heaven we will rejoice in His presence without end.

In closing, here these verses from Revelation 22 and think of the absence of shame and the abundance of riches which are ours in Christ by faith, not law-keeping.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:1–5, ESV)