

- 3) In verses 10:6-8 Paul set forth a summarization of what the righteousness based on faith “says,” and from there he again provided his own commentary to clarify its proclamation (10:9-13). The first thing to note is that his clarification is tied most directly to this righteousness’ insistence upon the nearness of the “word of faith.” Second, the meaning of his explanation depends largely on how one translates the Greek conjunction bridging verses 9 and 10. Most often this conjunction introduces either an object clause or a causal clause. In the instance of the former it is translated *that*, in which case Paul intended 10:9ff to show what is embodied in the idea, “word of faith.” In the latter case it can be rendered *because, for, for this reason*, etc., and it would then serve to introduce a clause explaining the sense in which the “word of faith” is near men.

Thus there are two general translational options by which 10:9-13 can be related to Paul’s preceding statements, and they may be worded as follows:

- *The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart – that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, namely, that if you confess with your mouth... This is the sense adopted by most English versions.*
- *The word – that is, the word of faith which we are preaching – is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. How so? Because if you confess with your mouth...and believe in your heart... (cf. ASV version).*

Commentators and Bible translators are divided in their opinions, but in the end both options make contextual sense and lead to the same fundamental point. For the “word of faith” is the apostolic gospel that calls men to receive God’s righteousness, forgiveness, and life through Jesus Christ. As such, it is the word that calls for faith; it is the word that calls men to believe in their hearts and confess Christ with their mouths.

But this word is further characterized by nearness, first because it pertains to an historically present reality that has been manifested openly in the sight of men, namely the completed redemptive work of Christ. More particularly to Paul’s statements, the word of faith is near men in that it is in their mouths and hearts: the promise it holds out is right before them and ready to be grasped. One need only believe, and he will obtain the salvation this word proclaims.

- a) But this must not be taken to mean that Paul’s purpose in verse 10:9 was to set out a confessional “script” for leading people to Christ (“Do you confess Jesus as Lord and believe that He was raised from the dead? If so, then you are saved.”). Rather, he intended his two-fold declaration to parallel and clarify his citation from Deuteronomy 30:14 (10:8). That is, as Moses’ “word” to Israel was near them, being understood in their hearts and acknowledged with their mouths, so the “word of faith” that has come in Christ is near to men in the same way. But this word further yields the fruit of inward *conviction* and outward *profession* of faith in Jesus.

At the same time, because this word is the word of *faith*, it highlights the core gospel truth that belief in Christ is the sole issue in a person's salvation and righteousness before God. Paul was not tying salvation to the two matters of belief *and* confession, although it is not uncommon for Christians to call for a public profession of Jesus as a crucial component in one's coming to Christ. This demand misunderstands Paul's point; he was simply recognizing that the mouth manifests the content in the heart.

- Here Paul associated this proclamation with the acknowledgment of "*Jesus as Lord.*" Once again people tend to make this a confessional mantra that must be sincerely articulated by the potential convert for him to be truly saved. And even where audible public profession of this doctrine is not required, this verse is still often used to prove that true Christian faith is inseparable from the believing person's unqualified submission to the lordship of Christ. Largely because of the inroads of "easy-believism" in American Christianity, the matter of Jesus' lordship has become a litmus test of biblical orthodoxy in many Christian circles.

But Paul was not interacting with contemporary evangelical phenomena; rather than spotlighting the Christian's obligation of unquestioning obedience, this confession of the lordship of Christ speaks of a person's conviction concerning the nature and work of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul's statement is literally, "*If you confess the Lord Jesus...*" The name *Jesus* identifies the human person, and the title *Christ* identifies His divine nature and status. Thus this confession is simply the outward profession of sincere faith in the true Jesus as He is revealed in the gospel. Lenski observes:

"'Jesus' merely identifies the person by means of the name he bore from childhood onward. But 'Lord' concentrates into this term all that he is as the exalted Savior, the divine Mediator, whom we trust, worship, and obey."

- This meaning is substantiated by Paul's second conditional clause: "*If you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead...*" As noted, one's profession of Christ is only the manifestation of the conviction of faith, and here Paul associates saving faith with belief in Christ's resurrection from the dead. The reason is that this event may be regarded as the apex of Jesus' saving work at Calvary, for it bore open witness to the satisfactory and full accomplishment of that work. It was His death that atoned for sin, overthrew the curse, and brought renewal; but it was His resurrection that proved to the world of men that those things had indeed been accomplished. Thus Paul could assert: "*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*"

“Express mention is made only of Christ’s resurrection; which must not be so taken, as though his death was of no moment, but because Christ, by rising again, completed the whole work of our salvation: for though redemption and satisfaction were effected by his death, through which we are reconciled to God; yet the victory over sin, death, and Satan was attained [finished] by his resurrection; and hence also came righteousness, newness of life, and the hope of a blessed immortality.” (John Calvin)

b) Having expressed in verse 9 how the “word of faith” is in the mouths and hearts of men, verse 10 amplifies the connection between faith, its response in confession, and salvation. Paul did this specifically by linking the heart’s belief with *righteousness*, and the mouth’s confession with *salvation*. In this way he continued the heart/mouth dualism introduced in 10:8. But the fact that he associated the one with righteousness and the other with salvation has led some to conclude that Paul was indicating a significant distinction between the concepts of righteousness and salvation corresponding with the distinctions between faith and confession. All sorts of possibilities have been posited, but the most natural reading suggests that no such important distinction was in Paul’s mind.

- Throughout the Roman epistle, and especially in the present section, he has emphasized the fundamental gospel truth that a person’s salvation is grounded in his appropriation of God’s own righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul’s sense of the intimate relationship between righteousness and salvation indicates that he was using them here as roughly synonymous ideas.

- At the same time, the preposition attached to these terms provides some indication that Paul was perhaps emphasizing salvation in its consummated sense. That is, his insistence that faith “results” in righteousness has a direct parallel in the second clause: as faith has its outcome in righteousness, so confession has its outcome in salvation. While the preposition need not carry exactly the same meaning in both clauses, Paul’s repetition of it in closely parallel statements indicates that he intended the same basic sense in both. One may then summarize Paul’s statements as follows:

*Faith in Christ lays hold of God’s righteousness. And because it is the reality of his **justifying faith** that the believer professes, his profession may be said to “result” in salvation – both as a present, new paradigm of existence, and as a final, consummate outcome.*

c) And because only faith in the divine Savior results in a person’s appropriation of true righteousness – namely, the righteousness of God – it constitutes the sole basis of men’s recovery and reconciliation to God.

For this reason it pertains equally to all: “*Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed*” (10:11). Paul’s repetition of this declaration from Isaiah (ref. 9:33) serves first to reiterate his overall instruction concerning the reason for Israel’s condemnation, but it more importantly acts to highlight the *universal relevance* of a salvation that is gained by faith alone. This is evident from Paul’s subsequent commentary on it: “*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for ‘Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.’*” (10:12-13)

- God is the God of all His image-bearers; all men share a common identity. But they also share a common plight, and God has provided to all a common remedy. There is one remedy for the human predicament, and that remedy is God’s Son and His atoning, restoring, and perfecting work (Acts 4:8-12; 1 John 2:1-2). With respect to both the Father and the Son, “*the same Lord is the Lord of all*” (10:12). The One who rules as Lord is the One who has sovereignly come to the rescue of His image-bearers. He is the Lord of mercy and grace; He is *Jehovah Jireh* – the Lord who looks to the need of those over whom He reigns (Genesis 22:1-18).
- And precisely because His one remedy pertains to all people, *every* person - regardless of any and every distinction – who calls upon Him in humble, trusting faith will be saved. The one Lord of all men abounds in the riches of saving mercy and provision, and He bestows them freely on all who seek them from Him.

Paul’s repeated interaction with the Old Testament in support of these great gospel truths is vitally important, *for in this way he emphasized to his readers that this provision of universal remedy was not some sort of new plan or development in the course of salvation history*. It was not as if the God of Israel had now become the God of all of humanity, and the salvation prepared for and promised to Israel was now being made available to the Gentiles. From the point of the Fall – which calamity implicated the whole of mankind – God’s purpose and remedy had never shifted. In the very context of His pronouncement of a universal curse God promised a Seed who would conquer the serpent, vanquish the curse, and restore life. The woman who had been the vessel of death for mankind was to be the vessel for the recovery of life; through her Seed, Eve would be the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:14-20).

From the beginning to the end, the Old Testament scriptures affirm the promise of Yahweh’s remedy and the hope it instills in men. So it is with the prophet Joel: in the great day of His indignation, God would judge His adversaries, purge the uncleanness of His people, and recover them to Himself forever. In that day, He would pour out His Spirit on all mankind in fulfillment of His promise that “*whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved*” (ref. Joel 2:1-3:21).