

What Is Saving Faith?

Romans 10: 5 – 9

- Today we have some hard truth, but it is important truth, truth we need. Truth that Satan will do and has done everything in his power to distort.
 - Distorting the truth is the strategy Satan employed with Eve in the garden of Eden. Rather than telling Eve outright lies, Satan twisted the truth, and that is what Satan is trying to do with us.
 - For example, many see Christianity as a moral code, based on the teachings of Jesus, that you must adhere to, in order to have a record of righteousness to present to God. It is that way that a person sees Christianity, then they have been deceived by Satan and missed the whole point of Jesus. And that is a very dangerous place to be.
 - It is why the Jews of Paul's day were cursed and cut-off—destined for hell. They were depending on the adherence to the law to give them a record of righteousness to present to God.
 - That's a lie that Satan, the accuser, wants you to believe, because if you believe that lie, then when you step into the courtroom, you will see no need to hire a competent defender. You'll think you can defend yourself. Why do I need to hire a lawyer if I am not guilty?
 - And that is true, unlike an earthly courtroom, in the heavenly courtroom you really don't need an advocate if you are not guilty of anything. In the heavenly courtroom there is no distortion of truth, like there might be in an earthly courtroom. It is just facts. But the problem is, the Bible is quite clear, the facts aren't on our side.
- We are all guilty under the law, because the fact is, that no matter how good we may think we are, we are all lawbreakers. So, in the court of heaven, if we try to stand on our record, we will have no defense.

Romans 3: 19 – 20 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

- Think of it this way. A perfect game in baseball is when the pitcher, and his team, get 27 outs in a row, not allowing a single player from the other team to even get to first base. It's quite an accomplishment. In the 240,000-game history of MLB there have only been 23 that have ever been pitched.
- Now let's say you are a pitcher, and you walk the very first batter you face in a game, and then you strikeout the next 27 batters, no one else reaches base. As good and as amazing as that may be. It's not perfection, all because you let that one batter reach first base.
- God, indeed, promises eternal life in exchange for a life of perfect righteousness. That is a truth.
- But here's the problem, just like the pitcher who walks the first batter, once we sin perfection is gone. No matter how righteous we are from that point forward,

no matter how much better than others we may be, once we sin, perfection is gone and along with it, eternal life.

- So, trying to convince us that we can defend ourselves is one way Satan tries to keep us from the one advocate who can defend us and save us. But there is another more insidious way that Satan tries to rob us of the advocate that we need that has become dangerously prevalent in the modern church.
 - It is the idea that all you have to do is say a prayer, or raise your hand and have the preacher pray, and you will be saved, and then you can go on your merry way and just continue to live life however you want to.
 - People call that faith, raising your hand, saying a prayer, and I guess it does take faith to do that, but my question is, is that really saving faith? The kind of saving faith that would be enough to have Jesus stand as your advocate in the heavenly courtroom. I honestly don't know.

Matthew 17: 20 if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed...

- Maybe faith that gets you to raise your hand or say a prayer at some point in your life is enough. But think what is really at stake here. It's an eternity with Jesus or an eternity in hell. Do you really want to leave it to doubt, or wishful thinking?

Ephesians 2: 8 – 9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works.

- This is indeed how we are saved. By grace through faith. But what is faith? Is faith simply raising your hand or saying a prayer? We might be able to think that, if all we do is look at Ephesians 2: 8 – 9, in isolation. But Ephesians 2: 8-9 wasn't written in isolation. It is part of all of chapter two of Ephesians, part of the whole book of Ephesians, part of the whole Bible.
 - In fact, look what the very next verse says, right after Paul assures us that we are saved by grace through faith.

Ephesians 2: 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- Now, as I read that, it sounds to me that there may be more to faith than just raising your hand and saying a prayer. In fact, think what we see in other places in the New Testament.

Philippians 2: 12 – 15 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

- Yes, it is God who works in us (verse 13), and we must, in faith, trust God to do that work, but faith in what God is doing in our lives through Christ will cause us to join the work God is doing (verse 12). What is the working out of our salvation? It is living it out our faith (verses 14 – 15).

2 Peter 1: 3 – 11 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has

granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Peter is urging us to make our calling and election, that is our salvation, sure. How? Through faith in the promises of God that leads us to a different lifestyle from the world around us. In fact, in verse 9, Peter even tells us if we don't have that lifestyle difference, then we have in essence forgotten our faith.
- Is a person still saved if that is the case? I don't know, only God does, but I think there is no doubt, that a person should never sit back and feel comfortably smug that I raised my hand and said a prayer and then I can just go on with life. It is a dangerous place to put yourself.
 - Think of Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25. A master (representing Jesus) was going on an extended trip, and as he left, he gave three of his servants his money to take care of. He gave one servant 5 talents of gold (a talent was a unit of measure equivalent to 75 pounds), another servant 2, and still another 1. The servants with the 5 and 2 talents double the money and on his return the master rewarded them. The servant with one talent was afraid of the master so he buried it and earned nothing. What happened to that servant? He lost it all.
 - We often mistakenly, minimize the meaning of the parable by equating the talents of gold to our gifts and talents, and think if we don't use our gifts that God will take them away. That's ok as an application, but I think there is much more than that. Much, much more. I believe the talents represent the work of the Gospel in our lives. We are not saved to just sit back and do nothing. There should be fruit—a return on the investment.

Matthew 11: 28 – 29 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

- Note the sequence. Jesus bids us to come. But to come takes knowledge—a knowledge of self that we are weary and tired of striving for a righteousness of our own, and a knowledge that by coming to Jesus we will find rest from all that striving. The only way we will come to Jesus is if we know those things.
- In faith, we yoke our hearts to Jesus, that is, we join our life to the life of Jesus. What causes us to do this? A heart that has been enflamed with love and zeal for Jesus as a result of our knowledge of self and of Jesus.
- And then what happens when we yoke our life to Jesus? Even as we find rest in Jesus, we join Jesus in the work he is doing, because his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.



I hope through this long introduction you see the truth of what saving faith is, as we engage with what Paul is teaching us here in Romans 10.

Romans 10: 4 – 9 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. 6 But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 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); 9 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.

• Knowledge of Self + Knowledge of Christ + Zeal in response to the knowledge = Saving Faith

1. Knowledge of self (verse 5)

- In verse 5, Paul is quoting: Leviticus 18:5, where Moses says about the law: “The man who does these things will live by [because of] them.”
 - Now, that may sound like Moses is teaching a different way of salvation and that eternal life could be achieved through law-keeping. That is indeed theoretically true. If you could obey the law perfectly, you would receive eternal life.

Psalm 24: 3 – 4 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?
4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

- But once we sin, we no longer can say that you obey the law perfectly. Once we sin, perfection is gone, and we can’t get it back. We no longer have clean hands and a pure heart because they have been defiled by sin.

James 2: 8 – 10 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

- Think of that. One slip up, one sin means perfection is gone and you are a lawbreaker. And, it doesn’t even have to be what we would consider a big sin. Any time we fail to love our neighbor as ourselves. Anytime we do something as simple as ignoring one person to show favoritism to another because we think they can do something for us, we sin—perfection is gone—we no longer can say we have clean hands and a pure heart.
- How often does that happen in our life? A lot more than once. For most of us that sin of not loving our neighbor is an everyday occurrence. We are not just people who break the law once, we are repeat offenders.

Deuteronomy 27: 26 “Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.”

- Once we lost that perfection, because of sin, not only can we not get it back, but we also actually fall under a curse. What is the curse? Spiritual death.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

We know we can't stand up under the weight of the law, we know we are going to have the book thrown at us, and the book will crush us, but rather than turning to Jesus to defend us, what do we do? We make our own law, our own standard.

- Do you remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus in Mark 10, and he asked Jesus what he needed to do to get eternal life. In reply, Jesus listed the second half of the 10 Commandments—"Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother."
- And the young man said, "I've kept all these things since I was a little boy." Now, never mind the fact that he probably hadn't done that; based on Jesus's exposition of the law in the Sermon on the Mount, during which Jesus said things like to even glance lustfully at another is to commit adultery.
- Jesus didn't even bother to drill down into that. Instead, Jesus simply told him to sell everything he had and give it to the poor and then come and follow Jesus. Instead of doing that, and inheriting eternal life, Mark tells us the young man went away sad.
- The young man was a law breaker, even though he didn't think he was. Why? Because he clearly loved his stuff more than Jesus, which meant he was breaking the first commandment to have no other gods.
- The young man had made his own standard, and by his standard, he was righteous. But in reality, he was a law breaker just like everybody else.
- The first thing that we each need to know is that we are each repeat offenders who are under a death sentence, and we desperately need an advocate. Without a knowledge of that we will never see a need-to-know Jesus or to yoke our life to his life, so that he can act as our advocate.

2. Knowledge of Jesus (verses 6 – 8)

- Once we come to the realization that we are under a curse and without a righteousness of our own, we can begin to look for a righteousness that is outside of us, but where do we find it? Do we have to go up to the heavens, or down to the depths to find it?

Romans 10: 6 -7 But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

- Here Paul is again quoting the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 30: 11 – 13. To understand why Paul's is quoting this, we need to understand Deuteronomy 30:1-14.
 - In Deuteronomy 30:1-2, Moses alludes to the fact that Israel will stray from God and receive "curses" and punishment, because of their sin. Just what we talked about a moment ago.
 - Then in 30:6 he says: "The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts ... so that you may love him with all your heart and ... soul, and live." The Israelites practiced physical circumcision as a sign of faith that God would find a way to cut away their sinful nature and make them righteous. God is making it clear there that they must have faith, because only God can do it.

- The law can't change a heart. Only God can do that through Christ. Through Christ our sinful flesh is crucified, and we are made into new creations.

2 Corinthians 5: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- A new heart and righteousness are a gift of God through faith, but how do we get it? Do we have to ascend to heaven to bring Jesus down to us, or descend to hell to bring him up from the grave?
 - Those are impossibilities for us. We can't ascend to heaven, because as we have already seen, we can't ascend the hill of the Lord because we do not have clean hands and a pure heart. And if we descend to hell, we are gone and lost forever. On our own we don't have the power to overcome death.
- But we don't have to do either because God has already done both for us in Jesus.
 - We don't have to ascend to heaven to bring Jesus down because:

Galatians 4: 4 – 5 When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- God brought his son down from heaven for us and clothed him in flesh to live the life we should have lived—a life of perfect righteousness.
- And, we don't have to bring Jesus up from hell, because God already sent His Son there and brought him back again. At the cross, Jesus took on all of our sin, faced the full wrath of God and was cut off from God. That's hell. But he didn't stay there. God brought him up to us once again.

Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

- How do you know that your sins are forgiven, and the righteousness of Christ is now yours so that you stand before God completely justified? Because God raised Jesus from the dead.
- The incarnation and the resurrection together prove that you can be justified, declared righteous by faith, even though you are a law breaker.

When Jesus died, he died as my representative, and I died in him; when he arose, he arose as my representative, and I rose in him..... I look at the cross of Christ, and I know that atonement has been made for my sins; I look at the open tomb and then the risen and ascended Lord, and I know that the atonement has been accepted. They're no longer remains a single sin on me, no matter how many or how great my sins may have been. My sins may have been as high as the mountains, but in the light of the resurrection the atonement that covers them is as high as heaven. My sins may have been as deep as the ocean, but in the light of the resurrection the atonement that swallows them up is as deep as eternity. Reuben A. Torrey

- So here in Romans 10, Paul loosely quotes Moses to show what faith knows. Faith knows that, in spite of our sinfulness, we don't need to do anything to be righteous. You don't need to scale heaven (Christ has already come down from it), or deal with your own sins in death (Christ has already done that).



So, we have the knowledge of ourselves, and our sinfulness and the knowledge of what Christ has done for us. What do we do with this knowledge? We turn away from ourselves and turn to Jesus to be our advocate.

1 John 2: 1 – 2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins.

- Now, what should seeing Jesus as our advocate, as the one who lived the life we should have lived and then died the death we should have died, do for us? If we really believe that, and understand what it means, shouldn't it create a zeal in our hearts to yoke our life to the life of Christ?

3. Zeal in response to the knowledge (verse 9)

- Look at the last thing that Moses says in Deuteronomy 30: 1 – 14:

Deuteronomy 30: 14 But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

- As Paul quotes these words in Romans 10: 8, Paul is showing that Moses knew that something more than law-keeping was required; and that God had done all that was required: "the word is near you". Moses knew that faith is simply about what you say with your mouth because you believe it in your heart.
 - As Jesus said, in **Luke 6: 45**, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Romans 10: 9 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.

- Faith isn't just a knowledge of yourself that you are a lawbreaker, it is not even just a knowledge of Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. It is believing those things down in your heart, so that what naturally comes out of your mouth is a confession that Jesus is Lord.
- What does it mean to confess that Jesus is Lord? In a general sense, it means our lives are yoked to him. But let's take a few moments and think through specifically what it means to have a life that is yoked to Jesus.
 - First, to confess that Jesus is Lord, means to confess that Jesus is indeed God.

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

▪ "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate Deity."

- And second, we call Jesus Lord because he has won the victory over the forces of evil. Satan, sin, death, and every power and principality were defeated by Christ through his perfect life, his sacrificial death, and the power of his resurrection.

Ephesians 1: 19 – 22 according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

- If we believe in the resurrection, then we must also believe and confess that Christ is Lord over all things, including us.
- If Christ is our Lord, then he must be Lord of our thinking—Lord of our minds. As Paul admonishes us in:

2 Corinthians 10: 5 take every thought captive to obey Christ,

- If we confess Christ as Lord, then Christ must be Lord over our ethics. Being yoked to Christ means obedience. Jesus still says to us today why do you call me Lord and do not do the things I say? (**Luke 6: 46**)
- Jesus must be Lord over our time and over all of our work. We cannot live life as if our relationship to Jesus is somehow detached from our plans. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, one of our very first questions of Jesus must be, "What shall I do Lord?" **Acts 22:10**
- Jesus must be Lord over our relationship to the world. He is our King and as Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5: 20**, "We are ambassadors for Christ. As Christians we stand as his representatives in the midst of history and culture to call the world to account. We are here to remind the world that this same Jesus Christ whom we serve has spoken from heaven to reveal what true righteousness is, and that all will have to give an accounting to him at final judgment.
- To confess that Jesus is Lord means that he is Lord over the church. The leaders of the church the pastors, elders, and deacons must serve the church as Christ served the church. The members must seek to love and live in unity because this is the express desire of our Lord.

John 17: 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

- Finally, Jesus must be Lord over the mission of our lives and the church. We'll talk more about that in the coming weeks.

"The minimum amount a person must believe to be a Christian is everything, and the minimum amount a person must give is all. You cannot hold back even a fraction of a percentage of yourself. Every sin must be abandoned. Every false thought must be repudiated. You must be the Lord's entirely." James Montgomery Boice *Christ's Call to Discipleship page 114*

Mark 8:36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

- To refuse to have Jesus as Lord of your life today means that you will not have him as Lord for eternity.
- I know there are others who are here, and you are thinking. "I believe all this, but I can't live it out. I want Jesus as Lord, but I keep wandering away doing my own thing. Does that mean that I don't really have saving faith?"
 - No, it just means that, like the rest of us you still have a sinful nature.
 - As you see your sinfulness, look to the cross and see the one who lived the life you should have lived and then died the death you deserved to die. Let Christ's enflame your heart with new zeal and desire to follow him.
- To have Jesus as Lord means nothing more than what Jesus said

Luke 9: 23 "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

- To deny yourself is to turn away from yourself. To follow Jesus is to recognize him as Lord. It is a daily mindset. Each day, wake up and remind yourself that you are not your own, you were bought with a price, and go and honor Jesus with your life.