

Romans 10 – The Word of Faith

Paul continues from the previous chapter with his intense concern for the Jewish people, his own nation, and will take this further in **chapter 11**. These three chapters contain many Old Testament references, and it is worth noting that he quotes them freely, making it quite clear that they are relevant to the believers there in Rome, many – probably most – of whom were not Jews. He continues his recurring theme that those who are in Christ are heirs of the promises to Abraham and so now included in ‘the Israel of God’.¹

He describes the current condition of the Jewish people at that time, and credits them with having ‘a zeal for God’, BUT, without knowing about God’s gift of righteousness through the Lord Jesus, they are trying to establish their own righteousness, just as he himself used to do (**Philippians 3:4-6**). In the process, *‘they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God’* – the righteousness **given by God**, not earned by the effort of mankind. In the end, they (the Jewish people) rejected God’s gift!

‘For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.’ That word ‘end’ doesn’t just mean the finish, it means the goal, the finishing line, the means by which something is accomplished and completed. Once again, Paul underlines that man-made ‘righteousness’ – through following laws – doesn’t work. Trusting in God’s gift is the only way.

In **v.6-8**, he quotes from **Deuteronomy 30** and it is significant that in this passage Moses is speaking to the Israelites – just before they cross the river Jordan into the Promised Land – about the way that the LORD will restore them if (and when!) they have returned to him after going away in disobedience *“if you listen to the voice of the LORD your God to keep his commandments . . . if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.”* (**Deuteronomy 30:10**)

Many translations have ‘obey’, but the actual Hebrew says ‘*listen to the voice of*’, which is significant in what Paul is writing about – response to what God is saying. Paul and his fellow apostles are proclaiming ‘the word of faith’, the word that leads the hearers to trust in God’s gift of righteousness in Jesus – and receive it! No need to struggle to try and find it, he says, it’s in your heart and in your mouth, which is where it needs to be . . .

The next verses (**9-13**) are a beautifully simple description of what goes on with each of us as we take our initial step of trusting in what Jesus has accomplished for us. Both mouth and heart are involved!

Are we a little surprised by what Paul says here – that confessing with our mouth leads to salvation? Isn’t it only **believing** that achieves salvation? After all, *“by grace you have been saved through faith”* (**Ephesians 2:8**). It’s certainly not by our own efforts, as we have seen repeatedly in **Galatians** and **Romans**! So what does he mean? Watchman Nee’s book, *Love Not The World*, and especially the chapter entitled *A World Under Water* (available from www.justonecandle.uk), gives a very clear explanation. Here are a few excerpts to give you a taste . . .

“ ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.’ (Mark 16:15,16.)

To many of us the form of that second sentence comes as a surprise. Jesus did not say that he who believes and is saved shall be baptised. No, He put it the other way round. He who believes and is baptised, He said, shall be saved. It is only at our peril that we change something that the Lord has said into something that He did not say.”

“We know that every good gift that God offers to us is given to meet and counter a contrasting evil. He gives us justification because there is condemnation. He gives us eternal life because there is death. He offers us forgiveness because there are sins. He brings us salvation – because of what? Justification is in terms of condemnation, heaven is in terms of hell,

¹ **Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Galatians 6:16.**

forgiveness is in relation to sins. Then to what is salvation related? Salvation, we shall see, is related to the *kosmos*, the world.”

“Thus salvation is not so much a personal question of sins forgiven or of hell avoided. It is to be seen rather in terms of a system from which we come out. When I am saved, I make my exodus out of one whole world and my entry into another. I am saved now out of that whole organised realm which Satan has constructed in defiance of the purpose of God.”

As Watchman Nee also writes, Peter makes a similar surprising statement in **1 Peter 3:21** : “*baptism now saves you*”!

Can we see the link between Nee’s teaching about baptism, Peter’s statement and Paul writing here in **Romans 10:10** ? ‘Baptism saves you’ and ‘confessing with your mouth brings salvation’. What do they have in common? In each case we are making **a clear declaration of where we stand**. It is something visible and/or audible to the world system around us – and to the people in it, as well as to the ‘ruler of this world’¹ – and declares that we have been transferred out from the authority of darkness and into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Colossians 1:13**).

My understanding is that the way in which this works has a lot to do with the way that we are made. Thinking or believing something can remain theoretical until we take some action on it or make a declaration of it. An obvious example is committing to marriage, but any kind of public commitment seems to have the same sort of effect: by making the declaration we also confirm the reality within ourselves; it becomes more real and vital to us. An ongoing process!

Maybe the underlying meaning of the word translated ‘confess’ is significant: ‘to say the same thing’. God says something – we hear it and receive it – we believe it – we then declare it ourselves, saying the same thing that God has said and ‘nailing our colours to the mast’² in the process!

Paul goes on in **v.11-13** to describe the simplicity of that step of faith, and to return to his recurring theme: “*there is no distinction between Jew and Greek*.” Our background doesn’t make any difference. If we trust the Lord, we will not be put to shame or disappointed and if we **call on his name**, we shall be saved. (There is that ‘speaking out’ again!)

This is the ‘other side of the coin’ from what Paul was emphasising in **chapter 9**. There, he was writing about God’s calling; here, he is writing about our response. But he also shows **how** God makes that call to us, whether we are Gentile or Jew (**v.14-21**).

v.14-15. Calling on the Lord’s name requires that we have believed in him. Believing in him requires that we have heard his call. Hearing his call requires that someone preaches (literally ‘proclaims’ or ‘heralds’) it, and heralds³ need to be sent (same root as the word ‘apostle’).

In **v.16**, Paul quotes Isaiah to underline that proclaiming the good news is no guarantee that all people will respond to it, and then in **v.18-21** he looks at the ‘excuses’ for disbelief for both Gentiles and Jews. We saw the answer to the Gentile excuse in **Romans 1:20-23**, and Paul musters evidence from **Deuteronomy 32:21** and **Isaiah 65:1&2** to show that God’s plan has always been to include other nations – and that disobedient and obstinate Israel would be provoked to jealousy!

Through it all, the glorious simplicity of **v.17** shines through: “*Faith from (‘out of’) hearing and hearing by (‘out of’) the word of Christ*.”

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¹ **John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2, 6:12, 1 John 4:4, 5:19**

² From the naval military practice of displaying one’s colours (signal flags or insignia) from the mast of a ship during battle to show loyalty. To surrender, one would take down one’s flag. If a ship nailed its colours to the mast, it meant it would fight to the death and not surrender.

³ In **1 Timothy 2:7** and **2 Timothy 1:11**, Paul calls himself a ‘preacher’ = herald.