

# Saved

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## Text

Romans 10:1-17

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) , or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 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); 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. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

## Introduction:

The key word of this passage corresponds to the central reality of the Christian life. That word, repeated four times in the passage, is the word "saved". No question is more important than the question the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas in Acts 16: "What must I do to be saved?" To be saved is the most essential reality of life, to be lost the greatest tragedy. Therefore, I want to explain from the text we have read, as clearly as I possibly can, what it means to be saved. I want us to look first at why we are saved, and secondly at why we are not saved. Before we do that we need a clear mental picture of what the word itself means.

We may begin with a synonym, the one synonym that Paul clearly uses in the text. Verse 10 states: “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” This is as it is translated in the English Standard Version, which is clearer than the King James Version which says: “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”

Justification is the central theme of the Epistle to the Romans, and in this verse Paul uses it as an exact synonym of salvation. Justification is not all of salvation, but when we are speaking of being saved, it is the part of salvation that we are envisaging. It is a legal word. It is a word that presupposes that we, as humans, have a moral responsibility before the God who created us, that we will be held accountable for our actions. In the first three chapters of this letter Paul demonstrates that all, Jew and Gentile have sinned. His conclusion in 3:23 is that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. For this reason he says in 3:20 that none of us will ever be justified by works of law. What he means by that is that no person can ever stand before God in judgment and be declared innocent and be found to be righteous on the basis of his or her own actions or works.

Another way of visualizing justification is to imagine final judgment. A common image associated with final judgment is a balance scale. This is the central image of Islam, but, unfortunately many Christians think in the same way. The image is that at the final judgment we will stand before God and he will have a giant balance scale, and he will place our good works on one side, and or sins on the other, and if our good deeds outweigh our sins we will be saved and go to heaven, but if our sins outweigh our good deeds we will be lost and condemned to hell. This image is helpful in only one sense; it helps us to clearly see that the opposite of justification is condemnation. Every human being who has ever lived on the face of the earth is morally responsible to the God who created them, and each of us faces one of two final outcomes – justification, salvation or condemnation. We will either in the end be saved or lost.

What is wrong about this image is to suppose that our final salvation depends on the good works that we have done. The Bible clearly says that salvation is “not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). As stated earlier, Paul argues first in Romans that justification or salvation is impossible by our own efforts because we are all sinners incapable on our own of fulfilling the demands of the law of God. This conclusion in Romans 3, however, does not lead Paul to despair. He says there is good news, very good news, in fact. The good news is that there is an entirely different way of being justified that has nothing to do with our works, but it is rather through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Paul would say that salvation is not earned or merited, but received as a free gift. We are justified, found innocent of sin and fit for heaven, not because we are righteous, but because Christ has paid the price of

our sins by his death on our behalf, and offers to us his righteousness as a free gift to be received by faith.

So, to be saved is to be innocent before God because our sins have been forgiven by the grace of God through the sacrifice of Christ. To be saved is to be free from God's judgment and condemnation through the intervention of Jesus Christ on our behalf. To be saved is to have the assurance of eternal life in heaven with God through the gift of Jesus Christ. To be saved is to know that we need not fear the judgment of God, because Christ has been judged in our place. Notice that in every statement we make about salvation Christ is central. If your hope and assurance of salvation is not clearly rooted in Jesus Christ and his work on your behalf, then you have missed the most basic reality of the Christian Faith. Everything begins with the gospel, the good news that Christ "died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15: 3-4).

This is the biblical picture of what salvation is, but we must still answer the question we set out to answer: How are we saved? Or, more personally and precisely: What must I do to be saved? As already stated earlier, I want us to look at the question first positively and then negatively by asking the two following questions:

- Why are we saved?
- Why are we not saved?

## I. Why are we Saved?

In the overall argument of the letter to the Romans Paul, in this passage, is asking the question: "If Jesus came as the Messiah and Savior of Israel, why is Israel not saved?" This section of the letter (chs. 9-11) speaks specifically to the question of the salvation of Israel, but since Paul has already made it clear that Jew and Gentile are saved in the same way, what he says specifically about Israel is also true for us.

One general point that he makes is that it is not hard to be saved. That is his point in quoting the passage from Deuteronomy 30 in verses 6-8: "But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 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)." Simply put, this is another way of saying the hard part is already done. Christ has already come into the world. He has already secured your salvation for you by his death and resurrection on your behalf. What then remains for you to do to receive the benefits of this salvation already secured by the work of Jesus Christ? In the rest of the chapter Paul

answers that question and I want to summarize his answer with three verbs and associate those verbs with three physical organs. He says we must:

- Hear with our ears
- Believe in our hearts
- Confess with our mouths

If we do those three things, he says, we will be saved. Let's look at them in that order.

### **Hear with your Ears**

"Faith", Paul says, "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." To be saved you must first hear the message of salvation. You must hear it clearly. You must understand it. This means that we who have heard it have a responsibility to tell it clearly and simply. We must not clutter it up with unnecessary embellishment. You who seek to be saved, who are not sure that you are saved, must first and foremost listen to the message of salvation. It is God's message to you. You must hear it and receive it as God gives it. Ponder it; scrutinize it until you grasp and understand it. Ask God to give you ears to hear. If you are not sure ask someone to explain it again, but your life depends on hearing the message.

### **Believe in your Heart:**

The next thing Paul says is that we must "believe in our heart that God has raised him from the dead." That doesn't mean that the resurrection is the only thing we must believe about the message of Christ, but rather that the conviction that Christ really did rise from the dead is what puts the seal of truth upon him and his message. If he rose from the dead, then he really is the savior of the world, and his message really is true, and the hope of salvation really is in him.

To believe in your heart means to come to a conviction that the message you have heard is true. It is worth noting here that the heart does not refer to, as we might think, the emotions, but the mind and the will. It speaks of an inner conviction, as opposed to an outward act. This is the reason I put it logically ahead of confessing with the mouth. It is possible for us to confess with the mouth without believing in the heart.

All of us can remember either something good or bad that we first heard with our ears and then believed in our heart and finally acted upon. When we first heard it, it may have seemed too good to be true, or too horrible, but little by little as the evidence accumulated, it became clear

that what we were hearing with our ears was indeed true and once the conviction of its truth formed in our heart we had no other option than to act upon that conviction.

Your first reaction to hearing the message of salvation as I have explained it might be to say: “No, that isn’t true; that isn’t what I have been told. I don’t believe that that is the way you are saved.” But, if you are honest you will search the Scriptures, because faith comes by hearing the word of God, and the more you search the deeper the conviction will become that salvation is a gift of God offered freely through Jesus Christ. When you do that there will then be a moment when you will say to yourself: “Christ really is the way, there is no hope of salvation outside of him; I must embrace him and believe in him.” The moment at which you do that is really the moment you are saved. That is really all it takes. This is believing in your heart, but if you believe in your heart you will do one more thing and that is the third thing Paul mentions in the text.

### **Confess with your Mouth**

Confessing with your mouth is just externalizing the internal conviction of your heart. This is the reason I have taken them in the order I have: hear, believe, confess. You can outwardly confess something without understand or believing, but you cannot understand and believe without confessing. Once we know that Christ is the way the truth and the life, that salvation is through him and him alone, that he has paid the price of our sins and that salvation has been freely given to us through him we cannot help but acknowledge him by our words and our deeds.

Let me conclude that the initial confession of Christ is done in two primary ways: by the testimony of words and the testimony of baptism. We put into words the conviction that we have come to have in our heart, and through the sign of baptism we acknowledge that we have received God’s free gift of salvation; that we have been cleansed from sin by his sacrifice, and that we identify with him as our savior and Lord.