

Romans 10:9-13

9 because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. 11 The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. 13 For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

In the letters from the Apostle Paul we get to see his theology. One of the main points is to focus all of your life on Christ as he has done. Another is to be united in Christ by following Jesus instead of individualism. A big theme that he emphasizes repeatedly is joy because the glory of God far outweighs any of his troubles of life. In today's Scripture the Apostle Paul addresses salvation.

The Apostle Paul points out a contrast between self-righteous and the righteousness of God. This is a very important issue back then and for us today. Paul addresses it through a comparison between zealous and enlightenment. He teaches that the zealous can be ignorant but rightness comes from God, the zealous seek their own and have not submitted to God's righteousness. This is very crucial and key to understanding ourselves. People want to be right by their own standards. Wherever we are in our faith journey, we want God's approval. No matter what level of devotion, whether or not we worship, what level of offering we give, we want to be righteous; we want God to be OK with us.

With Moses righteousness comes from the law. The people that were thought to be righteous were those that lived by the law. This begs the question. Who is and who is not righteous? People are not perfect. Therefore, we need grace. What God did is exactly what we needed. God gives us grace. Well, with Christ comes the end of the law, the end of the self righteous judgment of others. This is a very important theological concept. Christ changed everything because God replaced judgment with love. So now, righteousness is for everyone who believes; salvation is for all. In contemporary society it is popular to stop right there. All you need is to believe and God is OK with you no matter what you do. Well, that is not what the Apostle Paul teaches.

This brings us to today's Scripture. The Apostle Paul addresses what it actually means to believe. The word is to be on your lips and in your heart. This means more than just believing. You have to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the resurrected Savior of the World. It has to be on your lips. That means that you have to confess verbally. You have to give your testimony, or tell the story of Jesus. Witnessing seems to be that hardest thing to do today. But you can share the video, or donate Bibles, or invite someone to read the manuscript on line. You can also be a witness by your behavior. You can be like Jesus in a very selfish society.

You also have to believe in your heart. This is very significant. It requires love. It requires love from the Lord. Whereas, God out of love gives us Jesus and Jesus out of love gave himself for us. It also requires our response, our love for the Lord. Love flows both ways. This means that your faith is not to be on the surface but deep and heartfelt. God's love is perfect love. When God puts love in your heart, you change completely. The Apostle Paul teaches to believe in your heart. You are to actually love God and Jesus one hundred percent. The Holy

Spirit is a spirit of love and it consumes you. A very important theological concept of the Apostle Paul is a changed life that is full of the Holy Spirit.

It is a matter of experiencing a relationship. Sometimes relationships can be out of balance, where you care more for someone than they care for you. I had a childhood friend in Roanoke. We were best friends. We would hang out whenever we could. I would spend the night at his house and became a friend of the family. Then when I was eleven we moved to Lynchburg. A year later he and his family moved to Timberlake. We would visit when we could but he made new friends. I kept reaching out through the years and stayed in contact with the family. I was excited to see him again after so many years. Then he introduced me to his wife as someone he went to school with at Brookville. It was like he hardly ever knew me. I was extremely disappointed. Now think about God and how God must feel when people disregard the relationship. It is very important to understand that it is a matter of experiencing a relationship.

When people find out you are a Christian, it opens the door for discussion. Recently I was engaged in a conversation with a young man who found out that I am a preacher. This enabled me to openly talk about where he is in his relationship with God. So, I asked "Where are you in your relationship with God?" He grew up in church but has not worshiped in a long time. Like so many other people today, he just doesn't get it. For him going to church was just another thing that you do in life among many things to choose to do or not to do. It is not about going to church, it is about engaging in the relationship. Coming to church does not fill you with feel good stuff. The loving relationship that you engage in is what fills you with the feel good stuff. Worshipping God is an opportunity to express your praise, joy, and appreciation. It is an opportunity to join other people in celebrating thanks to God for the glory. You must move beyond the realm of individual complacency and see God as who God is and what God has done. Our response should be one of tremendous thanks. Ever since his encounter with the post resurrected Jesus, the Apostle Paul's whole life was one of tremendous thanks. He was so thankful that the whole of his life was pure devotion. That's what he teaches us.

We do not practice religion. What we do is we experience a relationship with God. Practicing religion can be hit or miss. Sometimes you participate, sometimes you do something else. Maybe you are active, maybe not. Or perhaps you are spiritual but not religious. Practicing religion is a matter of striving through religion to know God. But experiencing a relationship with God is another realm entirely. It is thriving in a loving relationship. Nothing in the world is better than a loving relationship. This is what God offers - a loving relationship. When God offers salvation for all it is an exchange of righteous; righteousness of oneself which is based on performance or one's own deeds is exchanged for the righteousness of God which is based on love, relationship, and grace. God reaches out to us. God makes the effort to engage in a loving relationship to offer salvation for all.