

SESSION 8

Believe

ROMANS 9:30–10:3, 9-17

EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES AND BELIEVES IN JESUS WILL BE SAVED.



When people hear about someone making a confession, their thoughts may go to the criminal justice system. Thinking that way wouldn't be a mistake. When a person confesses to a crime, it usually means that the law has been broken and justice will be served. In the legal system, confession confirms guilt and results in punishment. But in the gospel, confession of Jesus acknowledges our need for Him and leads to freedom and salvation.

*WHAT'S THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CONFESSING TO A CRIME
AND BELIEVING THAT YOU BROKE THE LAW?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul exposed his heart for the Jews as he wrote to the church in Rome. He recounted how God had blessed them throughout their history as His people. God had embraced them as His people, given them His law, graced them with His presence, and fulfilled His promise to them regarding Jesus Christ.

In the face of Israel's rejection of Christ, Paul insisted that God had not failed them. God's relationship with them across the centuries underscored His sovereign wisdom. Paul touched on an assortment of ways in which God worked with His people in keeping with His eternal purpose. God's actions reveal that He made decisions about them that would glorify Himself. Accordingly, nobody had the authority to question His wisdom any more than a lump of clay had the right to doubt the potter.

In keeping with His eternal plan, God included Gentiles as well as Jews. Unlike the Jews, Gentiles did not have the Mosaic law to guide them. They lived in spiritual darkness. However, when some of them

heard the good news of Christ, they gave their lives to Him by faith. Meanwhile, Jews stumbled over Christ like runners who tripped over a stone on their path.

Paul went on to assert that Jesus alone provides the way to salvation. Anyone who believes in Him and confesses Him as Lord would be saved. Likewise, everyone who receives the gift of salvation through Him will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him.

Paul asserted that Jewish people could not say that God had not given them the opportunity to hear the message of salvation. He cited three Old Testament passages to support it. He referred to Psalm 19:4 as he underscored the truth regarding the proclamation of God's Word. Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1 confirmed that they had an awareness of God's ways with them. Even so, they refused to obey Him.



9:30 What should we say then? Gentiles, who **did not pursue righteousness**, **A** have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith. **31** But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. **32** Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the **stumbling stone**. **B** **33** As it is written, Look, I am putting a stone in Zion to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and the one who believes on him will **not be put to shame**. **C** **10:1** Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation. **2** I can testify about them that they have **zeal** **D** for God, but not according to knowledge. **3** Since they are **ignorant** **E** of the righteousness of God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God’s righteousness. [. . .] **9** If you **confess with your mouth**, **F** “Jesus is Lord,” and **believe in your heart** **G** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. **11** For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, **12** since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. **13** For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **14** How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? **15** And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. **16** But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? **17** So **faith comes from what is heard**, **H** and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

A. Gentiles did not keep the law. They received God’s favor by faith. In contrast, the Jews could never find righteousness in the law.

B. Literally an obstacle that causes one to trip. For many Jews, Jesus was a stumbling block to earning God’s favor through the law of Moses.

C. Paul referred to Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 to show that God sent Jesus as Messiah to remove Israel’s shame and turn the nation back to Him.

D. The Israelites were passionate about God, but their passion was misguided.

E. Not an intellectual ignorance. Rather, the Jews lacked a proper understanding of God’s plan for salvation. As a result, they blindly pursued their own path to Him through the law.

F. The Greek word translated “confess” means to “speak the same” or “agree.” It aligns the speaker with the reality that Jesus is Lord. This suggests a submission to God’s plan for salvation over any human plan.

G. Faith in the finished work of Jesus. Confession and faith work together to bring individuals into a personal relationship with God through Christ.

H. Saving faith becomes active when one hears and accepts the gospel. The content of the gospel is the “message about Christ.”

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Righteousness through Faith

(Rom. 9:30-33)

All people need to understand that true righteousness comes through faith not by works.

- **Why might people stumble over the message of the gospel?**

2. Misguided Zeal

(Rom. 10:1-3)

Believers can follow Paul's example by praying for the salvation of lost people.

- **How did Paul's love for the Jews lead him to respond to their needs**
- **Whose salvation are you continually praying for?**

3. Salvation Available to All

(Rom. 10:9-13)

Any person who has not yet believed and confessed Jesus can do so and be saved.

- **What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord?**

4. Go Tell

(Rom. 10:14-17)

Believers must tell others the gospel message and send missionaries throughout the entire world.

- **What hinders people from calling on Jesus for salvation? What role do believers play in removing these hindrances?**

Apply the Text

Spend time with your Bible study group sharing accounts of your most recent conversations about Jesus with lost people. Then have several members share their testimonies about how they gave their lives to Christ.

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.
(See John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use other Scripture to help understand another Bible passage.

Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-41. List all the main points that you see in his sermon and compare it to what you find in Paul's teaching from Romans 9-10. Peter's message and Paul's writings make up what has been called Christianity's "kerygma," or the preaching of the apostles. Consider how you can share these truths with those around you. Evaluate your effectiveness in sharing the gospel with those in your sphere of influence.

TALK IT OUT

As you focus on Romans 10:9, identify the key words.

Salvation involves personal faith in Jesus and a public confession of Him. These are really two sides of the same coin. Paul emphasized the need to confess “Jesus is Lord.” This involves a public confession that Jesus really is who He said He was, the Son of God and Savior. To “confess” literally means to acknowledge or to agree. A person who confesses Jesus as Lord agrees with God about the divinity and reign of His Son. Paul also emphasized the need to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. The crucifixion and resurrection serve as the linchpins for the Christian faith. Paul declared that if Jesus was not raised from the tomb, then our faith as Christ followers is in vain (1 Cor. 15:17-19).

In what ways can confession be more than words—how might it be reflected in daily choices and attitudes?

Romans 10:9 teaches us to trust Jesus in our hearts and follow Him with our lives. When we believe He is alive and confess Him as Lord, our faith shows through daily obedience and trust.

What does following Jesus look like in your everyday life?

Place Romans 10:9 on your phones and memorize it together.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 9:30-33

Note the contrast between Gentiles and Jews in these verses.

Paul has explained in Romans that all people—Jews and Gentiles—have sinned against God and need salvation. There is one way of salvation for all people—through Christ. Here, Paul noted that Gentiles did not “pursue righteousness.” On the contrary, they wandered in spiritual darkness. But when they heard the good news about Jesus Christ, many Gentiles believed and placed their faith in Christ, receiving His gift of salvation.

The people of Israel chose a path that led them in a different direction. They pursued righteousness based on works. They thought that if they kept the law, they could earn righteousness. Consequently, they turned their backs on the gospel message that centered in Christ. They rejected Jesus and the way of salvation that He alone could provide. His life, death, burial, and resurrection served as the stone they stumbled over as they sought to achieve righteousness by way of the law.

In verse 33, Paul pointed to two Old Testament passages to make his point. In Isaiah 8:14, the Lord said that the Messiah would be a sanctuary for some, but for the house of Israel, He would be “a stone to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and a trap and a snare.” In Isaiah 28:16, the prophet noted that the Messiah would be a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation for the one who believes.

Summarize Paul’s point in these verses.



Day 2: Romans 10:1-3

Consider how these verses prompt you to pray.

Paul addressed the believers in Rome with sincere affection. Even though he had not yet visited the church, he affirmed their spiritual kinship as “brothers and sisters.” At the same time, he revealed his affection for the Jewish people. His heart had been broken for them, and he had a genuine desire to see them come to faith in Christ. Paul’s heavy burden over their lostness caused him to pray for their salvation.

Paul could testify to the difficulty Jews had in trusting Jesus for salvation. He knew they possessed a “zeal for God.” They tried to obey the requirements of the law to attain righteousness on their own. However, they lacked the spiritual knowledge necessary to grasp God’s intention regarding the law. It’s not that they lacked intelligence. Rather, they suffered from spiritual ignorance. They had been ignorant of the way God intended for them to be made righteous. They continued to work toward earning their own righteousness by keeping the law. They simply had not submitted to God’s way of being right with Him through faith in Christ.

Whose salvation are you continually praying for?



Day 3: Romans 10:9-13

Underline the words, “Jesus is Lord.”

God’s way of salvation involves confessing “Jesus is Lord.” Confession is an external sign of one’s acceptance of Him, but accepting Jesus goes beyond simple lip service. Faith demands that you “believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.” Salvation involves both believing and outwardly confessing.

While Paul emphasized that salvation is something that takes place in the heart, he also stressed the importance of the mouth. Ultimately, confession and belief are two sides of the same coin. When we confess, we express with our words what’s going on in our hearts.

Paul underscored the truth that the good news of salvation is for everyone. God did not intend for the gospel to be shared only with certain individuals. He wants every person to hear it. Those who place their faith in Jesus will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him. The word shame can also mean “disappointed.” Everyone, both Jew and Gentile, can have confidence that God saves those who put their trust in Him.

In verse 13, Paul emphasized that everyone is welcome at the cross. Consequently, God does not want anyone to be excluded from the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation and to call on the name of the Lord Jesus to be saved.

How would you explain to someone what it means to confess Jesus as Lord?



Day 4: Romans 10:14-15

Pay attention to the chain of steps Paul built with his questions.

In light of the truth that the gospel is for all people, Paul raised four questions. Each question began with the same word: “how.” First, he asked how individuals would “call on” Christ to save them if they have not “believed in” him. Second, he wanted to know how people could believe in Jesus “without hearing” about Him. Third, how could they hear about Jesus “without a preacher”? He considered a preacher to be any believer who shares the gospel message.

The fourth question asks how they can preach “unless they are sent.” This fourth question points to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Paul’s poignant question challenges us to support missionaries and other vocational ministers as they share the gospel. They’ve been called to proclaim the good news of Christ around the world. However, it also challenges all believers. We have been sent to share the gospel in our neighborhoods and around the corner. Paul’s reference to Isaiah 52:7 in verse 15 inspires us as we take to heart our call to make sure that others hear the gospel.

What do these verses suggest people need before they can call on the Lord?



Day 5: Romans 10:16-17

Reflect on the relationship between believing and obeying.

Everyone needs an opportunity to hear the gospel. However, not all people who hear the gospel will respond by receiving the gift of salvation. Paul said that not all will obey the gospel. He may have been thinking about Jewish people in his day. They rejected Christ and the gospel message that centered in Him. However, they couldn't say that the gospel had never been shared with them. Paul echoed Isaiah's assertion that the message of salvation had been presented to them, but they refused to believe it (Isa. 53:1).

Receiving the gift of salvation requires people to place their faith in Jesus. When individuals place their faith in Him, they will be saved. They cannot earn their salvation. Neither can they expect to be saved because they happen to have some sort of relationship with believers. Therefore, the challenge confronting believers is to make sure that others have the opportunity to hear the gospel. After people hear about Christ, they will be able to respond to what they have heard. Hearing the good news about Christ prompts them to place their faith in Him.

Who in your world needs you to share the good news of Christ with them?

APPLY THE TEXT

When did you place your faith in Jesus and receive His gift of salvation? What kind of difference does He make in your life right now?

JOURNAL

