

SESSION 3

The Message



QUESTION 1:

Where do you turn for trustworthy information?

THE POINT

Jesus saves those who trust in Him.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 10:8b-17

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Developing relationships and friendships online has become commonplace, but what happens if one of those “friends” refuses to meet in person? A documentary TV series investigates just such online-only relationships. Suspicions arise that the person refusing to meet isn’t who he pretends to be, and the show’s investigators seek to discover the truth. Unfortunately, most cases are heartbreaking because the person being deceived has no idea she’s not in the relationship she thought she was.

We long to connect with others who will accept and love us authentically. Many who feel they have no success in relationships turn to the Internet as a way to connect with someone else. This documentary reveals some people’s desperate need to trust someone who will value and honor them.

Trust is a major issue in our society. The documentary is indicative of a culture plagued with identity theft, child abductions, trafficking, and scams. In short, our culture is severely lacking in truthfulness and trust, but fortunately there’s an answer. His name is Jesus. A relationship with Him provides the promise of an eternal future with the One who can always be trusted.

Romans 10:8b-10

8b The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

KEY WORD: Righteousness (v. 10)—A right standing before God, achieved not through human effort but through justification, where human sinfulness is exchanged for the perfect, imputed righteousness of Christ.

As Paul began verse 8, he said, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” God did not make discovering and experiencing salvation some massively difficult task; salvation is as near as our mouths and our hearts. What we do with our mouths and hearts is seen in two simultaneous actions:

1. **Believe in your heart.** “Faith” is believing and trusting in something or someone. “Trust” is our assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of the thing or person in which we place our trust. Our salvation is not dependent on anything we do, but it is secured by our faith in Jesus Christ has done. Belief is much deeper and richer than just knowing something is true. As James wrote, “The devils also believe, and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). To “believe in thine heart” is to place our total trust and reliance on what we believe. Through faith and trust in Jesus, we believe and receive Him as our Savior, the perfect atoning sacrifice through His death and resurrection. His resurrection is the validation of His sacrifice

for our sins. Jesus overcame death, and He made the way for us to be reconciled to God. This is the gospel we believe in our hearts.

- 2. Confess with your mouth.** We confirm our belief in the gospel and the lordship of Christ by confessing it with our mouth. To confess Jesus as Lord is to set Him apart from any one or anything else. There is no other god; only Jesus is Lord. We acknowledge Jesus has paid the price for our salvation; therefore, our lives are no longer our own. Since He paid the price, He is Lord and Master, having all power and authority over us (Phil. 2:5-11).

Our inward belief and outward confession go hand in hand; they are two sides of the same coin. Interestingly, in verse 9, Paul ordered the actions: “confess” and “believe”; however, in verse 10, he reversed them: “believeth” and “confession.” The result of confessing and believing (or of believing and confessing) is salvation and righteousness. Jesus saves us by removing our sin and His righteousness is ascribed to us. Jesus is our righteousness, and He makes us righteous (Rom. 5:19).

QUESTION 2:

How would you describe the connection between belief and confession?

Without believing hearts, we wouldn't be able to confess Jesus with our mouths. Belief and confession lead to righteousness and attest to our salvation. Our profession of faith confirms Jesus as God and His authority over life and death. Without this acknowledgment, we have no salvation or righteousness. Though God reveals Himself in creation and many believe in His existence, a saving faith is found only in belief and confession in Him.

QUESTION 3:

What does it mean to recognize Jesus as Lord?

Romans 10:11-13

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The gospel is not for an elite social club, where God only extends invitations to those deemed worthy of membership. Such a club would be empty anyway, because none of us is worthy. That was Paul's point in the opening chapters of his Letter to the Romans: no matter how good or bad we think we are, we all have sinned and are not worthy (Rom. 3:23).

But the beauty of the gospel is that, just as all of us are unworthy sinners, we all have the opportunity to believe and accept the gospel. These verses assure us that God's desire has always been that we invite all people to believe on Him, "For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Shame is that painful emotion we feel when we become conscious of our guilt and wrongdoing. We have brought disgrace on ourselves and we are ashamed. Adam and Eve felt no shame (Gen. 2:25) until they sinned against God—and the shame of sin has been with us ever since. But the gift of salvation frees us from shame. When we believe and trust in the death of Jesus, who took our condemnation and shame upon Himself, He frees us from sin and shame.

The gospel is for everyone—*All of us*—regardless of ethnicity or background. The earliest Christians were slow in realizing this truth, but the Book of Acts contains repeated reminders of this truth. When Jesus reminded His followers of the promised Holy Spirit, He told them the Spirit would empower them to "be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in

Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit would enable the disciples to carry the gospel from Jerusalem, a solely Jewish culture; to Judea, the region where Jerusalem was located; to Samaria, the beginning of Gentile territory; out to the ends of the earth, which is inclusive of all people.

We also saw this in our first session with the Great Commission Jesus gave us. Jesus’ command to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19) goes right along with Romans 10:13: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Those who believe and call on the name of the Lord, regardless of who they are or where they come from, are assured of receiving the gift of salvation and the blessing of God’s abundant promises. God extends the invitation to all for a relationship with Him. This means that, as believers carrying out the Great Commission, we should be motivated to share the gospel with any and all with whom we cross paths.

QUESTION 4:

What do these verses teach us about God’s gift of salvation?

Romans 10:14-17

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

As beautiful as this promise of salvation is, it does not happen in a vacuum. Someone had to proclaim the message that calling on the name of the Lord leads to salvation. Starting with the point of salvation, Paul walked us backwards to see what was involved and who initiated the whole process. It all begins with God Himself!

- ▶ Christ sends one to proclaim His message.
- ▶ The one who is sent preaches the message.
- ▶ People hear the message.
- ▶ The people who hear believe.
- ▶ Those who believe call on the name of the Lord.
- ▶ Those who call on the name of the Lord are saved.

People have used a variety of means to spread the message of salvation, but it boils down to one essential element: one person telling another. When we accept and receive the good news, we receive both the benefits of that salvation—a forgiven life fully restored to a relationship with God—and the privilege of sharing that same gift with someone else.

Salvation is not automatic. Just because someone hears the gospel doesn't mean he is automatically saved. Does a person merely hear the words—in one ear and out the other—or does he take the message of salvation to heart? The Hebrew word

Share Jesus Without Fear:

The Sin of Silence

If we don't explain our faith, our friends and family may never understand the gospel and therefore never have an opportunity to be led by the Holy Spirit to believe it.

There is no failure in God's kingdom when you choose obedience and share your faith. This is the one area of your Christian life you ultimately cannot botch. Even if you share stupidly, unlovingly, or with poor timing, our heavenly Father can use it. What He can't use is your silence.

translated *hear* carries the idea that you obey and follow what you hear, and the Greek word Paul used for *hear* in this passage often implies the same idea. The connection between hearing and obeying is seen in verse 16: “They have not all obeyed the gospel.” Paul made a strong connection between faith and obedience. A person must act on what he hears.

In the Old Testament, the Jews had been taken into exile because of their disobedience. God would not leave them there; they would be released from their captivity. The prophet Isaiah foretold that the captives would welcome the messenger who brought them the news of their coming release; they would describe the feet that brought such good news as beautiful (Isa. 52:7). Paul applied that same idea to those who brought the news that freedom was available for those who had been captive to sin. “How beautiful are the feet of them that ... bring glad tidings of good things!”

DIGGING DEEPER

THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS

It is important that everyone have the opportunity to hear. Apart from hearing the message no one can believe. People do not believe in one of whom they have never heard. Therefore it is necessary that a messenger be sent. Someone must come preaching the good news. Stott observes that “the essence of Paul’s argument is seen if we put his six verbs in the opposite order: Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved.”

The Greek word group used in both verses 14 and 15 reflects primarily the activity of preaching. Paul once again drew on Isaiah to emphasize how welcome are those who come bearing the good news of the gospel (v. 15). Although the prophet was speaking of the messengers who brought the news of Israel’s imminent release from Babylonian captivity (Isa 52:7), Paul applied the verse to the apostolic bearers of the good news of the gospel. The apostolic writers were not hesitant to apply Old Testament passages to New Testament settings.

Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27 of The New American Commentary, E. Ray Clendenen, gen. ed. (Nashville: B&H Pub., 1995), Wordsearch ed.

Not everyone will accept the gospel, but those who do hear and believe will be forever grateful to those who bring the good news to them. We are those heralds—we are the ones who call out and deliver the message of life.

Two things should motivate us to be the ones who share the message:

1. **Gratitude.** We express our thanks to God for the salvation we have through Christ by sharing that message of salvation with others. We can be grateful that God used someone else to tell us about Jesus, and we can do the same for others.
2. **Love.** We can be a conduit of His love to others. We see God's love in that He saved us even though we were sinners (Rom. 5:8). We have benefited from His love, and that love leads us to love others. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

QUESTION 5:

Why do you think it is challenging to share the gospel with others?

ENGAGE

Using only three sentences, write down your conversion experience. Make sure you include what your life is like now.

1.

2.

3

Look for opportunities to share the good news with someone this week.

LIVE IT OUT

What will you do this week with the message of salvation?

- ▶ **Reflect.** Reflect on those who contributed to your salvation and consider what they did that led you to accept the good news they shared? List ways you can do something similar for others.
- ▶ **Write.** Write a note or call the individuals who played a role in your coming to faith in Christ. Thank them for their love and obedience in sharing the gospel with you.
- ▶ **Share.** Prayerfully consider those whom God has placed in your path. Look for opportunities to tell them the message of Christ. Let God empower you to be an instrument that brings others to a saving knowledge of Him.

