

Believe
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Allen Power

Romans 9:30-10:4, 9-17

Opening: What is the difference between believing someone is trustworthy and actually trusting that person with something important? Illustration: My former boss/executor.

Many people know things about Jesus. They may believe the historical facts about His life, death and resurrection. They may even agree with His teaching. As we look at this text we will see the contrast between knowing about Jesus and trusting Him for salvation.

The Point: We cannot earn righteousness before God; we receive it through faith and trust in Jesus Christ—and everyone needs to hear that good news.

- Paul began chapter nine by expressing his heartbreak because the people of Israel (his people) who, though very religious, sincere and zealous for God, were relying on their own righteousness rather than trusting Christ.
- In 9:30-10:4 Paul draws a remarkable contrast:

(NLT) — 30 What does all this mean? Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God's standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. **31** But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded.

- The contrast: The Gentiles, who weren't pursuing righteousness through the law, obtained righteousness through faith. Israel, on the other hand, pursued righteousness through the law but failed to obtain it because they pursued it through works rather than faith.

32 ... they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path.

- God provided the cornerstone—the promised Messiah—but many Israelites stumbled over Him rather than trusting Him.

33 God warned them of this in the Scriptures when he said, "I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. But anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." **1** Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. **2** I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. **3** For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. **4** For Christ has

already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God. (Is. 8:14-15; 28:16; 1 Peter 2:8)

- We've seen this ourselves. It can be easier for someone with no "religion" at all to trust Christ than someone who has been raised with "religion."
- It's possible to attend church, study Scripture, serve faithfully, and still misunderstand the basis of salvation.
- Many Israelites were zealous for the God of their Scriptures, yet they failed to recognize and submit to the righteousness God provides through Jesus Christ.
- Here is an important point. In 9:3 Paul said, "I would be willing to be...cut off from Christ!—if that would save them."ⁱ Wow! Paul didn't bash the people of Israel who had thus far rejected Christ; he had a heart to see them saved. That's convicting!
- Now we come to two famous and crucial verses about salvation, verses 9 & 10:

(NLT) — 9 If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. **11** As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."

- In verses 9 & 10 we see two related expressions of saving faith:
 - Confessing Jesus as Lord.
 - Believing in your heart.
- Confess: The word means to agree. When we confess our sins, we agree with God about our sin. Here we agree Jesus is Who God says He is.
- The confession of the early church, and still today is: "Jesus is Lord."
- Confession isn't a verbal formula that earns salvation. It is the outward expression of genuine faith. When we genuinely believe who Jesus is and what He has done for us, that naturally comes out in what we say and how we live.
- Let's talk about BELIEF. What does it mean to believe something "in your heart?" How is it different from knowledge or even intellectual agreement?
- I wrote this statement: *"The best and worst decisions are made in the heart."*
- Through persuasion you might change someone's mind but good luck trying to change what they believe in their heart.
- Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 4:23 (NLT) — 23** Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.
- When we allow our hearts to become consumed with the wrong things, it eventually affects the direction of our lives. Conversely, when our hearts are genuinely trusting Christ, that changes the direction and priorities of our lives.
- In the context of trusting Christ, two important points:
 - Belief in Christ isn't just about our emotions. The heart represents our inner person – mind, convictions, desires and will.
 - Also, our confidence rests not in how strongly we can believe, but in the One in whom we believe.
- Trusting Christ isn't just about confession. It is about confession that flows from belief in the heart. What must we believe? Paul gives us specifics:
 - God raised Jesus from the dead.

- I am made right with God by trusting in Jesus for salvation.
- Why is belief in the resurrection crucial to trusting Christ?
- **1 Corinthians 15:14 (NLT) — 14** And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless.
- **1 Corinthians 15:17 (NLT) — 17** And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.
- The ESV renders verse 10: “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

12 Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. **13** For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Verse 12 would have been hard for the people of Israel living in Rome to hear.
- Salvation is for everyone: Jew or Gentile. It is a gift to all who call on Jesus.
- To reinforce the point, Paul makes the invitation unmistakably clear in verse 13: ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’
- Jesus said in **John 6:37 (NLT) — 37** ...those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. In that verse we see both God’s sovereign initiative and Christ’s open invitation.
- Charles Spurgeon said, “...your business is to preach to them all, to ‘preach the gospel to every creature.’”ⁱⁱ
- That brings us to verses 14-17:

14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? **15** And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”

- We just heard Jeremy preach on this passage regarding missions.
- Paul’s progression: Salvation requires BELIEF (in the heart) --- belief comes from hearing about Christ (good news of the gospel) --- hearing comes from telling – telling comes from sending. Those who “bring good news” do a “beautiful” thing!
- In the interest of balance, in verse 16 & 17 Paul cites two realities of evangelism.

16 But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, “Lord, who has believed our message?”

- Faithful preaching doesn’t eliminate human resistance to God’s truth. But...

17 So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

- Though some will not believe, we must faithfully proclaim the good news as widely as possible!

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- **RELIGION CANNOT SAVE US.** Religious sincerity, good works, and personal morality cannot make us righteous before God.
- **ONLY CHRIST CAN SAVE US.** Saving faith means genuinely trusting the risen Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- **THE GOSPEL MUST BE SHARED.** People need to hear the good news about Jesus in order to believe.
- Paul's heart's desire and prayer were for the salvation of his fellow Israelites.
- He understood the gospel. He believed the gospel. And he desperately wanted others to receive the gospel.
- Let's ask God to help us to have that kind of heart for those who have not trusted Christ.

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 9:3). Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Seed by the Wayside*, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 49, Sermon 2843.