

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME X
INVITATION OF THE GOSPEL
AUGUST 14, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What does it mean to believe in Jesus for salvation?

Key Text: *“For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ 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); ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹² 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. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:5-13)*

The Bible teaches that the moment we receive Christ, our sin is exchanged for Christ’s righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* A Christian dad illustrated this truth for his 6-year-old daughter in a memorable way at the dinner table one evening. Toward the conclusion of dinner, he asked her to give him her dirty, used napkin (a worthless item), and in exchange, he gave her a coin (a valuable item). He then explained that her dirty, used, worthless napkin represented her sins, and the valuable coin represented the righteousness—the perfect goodness—of Jesus. Jesus took our sins upon Himself and was punished on the cross in our place. Then He offers us, in exchange, His own righteousness. When we trust in Jesus as Savior, our sins are forgiven, and God sees Jesus’ perfect life when He sees us. That is what makes us right with God. Without accepting this great exchange—our sins for Jesus’ righteousness—we remain in our sins and lack Christ’s righteousness. The dad asked his daughter: “What did Jesus take from us?” She answered, “Our sin.” Then he asked, “What did Jesus give us in return?” “His perfect life,” she answered. She grasped the gospel!

In today’s text, the Apostle Paul emphasizes this great exchange. He writes about the invitation of the gospel—God’s amazing offer to exchange our sins for His righteousness. But He also expresses concern for the Jewish people because they had rejected the “great exchange” and instead were trying to achieve their own righteousness apart from Christ.

1. The righteousness of God was foretold by Moses.

“For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.” (v.5)

God gave the law through Moses even though He knew people couldn’t keep it perfectly in order to show people how sinful they are (Gal.3:19) and teach them to recognize the Messiah and His work when He came.

Discuss: Why is it important that God promised – centuries before Christ came to earth – to establish salvation by grace through faith, not by keeping the law?

2. It is not necessary to ascend into Heaven or descend into the grave to access the righteousness of God—it is as near as your heart (belief) and mouth (request).

“But the righteousness based on faith says, ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷ or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)?⁸ ‘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).” (v.6-8)

Paul quotes from Moses’ writings in Deuteronomy 9 and 30 to argue that Jews should not expect someone to ascend to heaven to bring down the Messiah (v.6) nor to descend into the abyss (the grave) to bring up the Messiah (v.7). Jesus Christ, the Messiah, has already come down from heaven in the flesh, and He has already died and risen from the grave! Faith in Him is as near as our “heart” by which we believe and our “mouth” by which we express our belief and call upon Him (v.8).

Discuss: Paul wants to emphasize that salvation is not something far away that we have to search for and find; rather, it is as close as one’s heart and mouth. Why is it important for people to know the closeness and availability of salvation?

3. Salvation is conceived in the heart and confessed with the mouth.

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.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” (v.9-10)

Heart-belief in Christ’s resurrection (v.9b) expressed with our words that Jesus is Lord (v.9a) indicates whole person belief and results in being “justified” and “saved” (v.10).

Discuss: According to 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, why is the resurrection of Jesus essential for salvation?

4. God’s invitation to salvation is impartial and universal.

“For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’¹² 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.¹³ For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” (v.11-13)

Paul says that God will never fail to provide righteousness to anyone who believes. No one who trusts in God will ever regret or be put to shame for their belief (v.11).

Discuss: Why is it important to know that God’s invitation is impartial and universal?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of the Book of Romans at www.enduringword.com

“55 Old Testament Prophecies about Jesus” article at www.jesusfilm.org

“Why Believe in Jesus?” article at www.gotquestions.org