

# “As Close As Your Mouth and Your Heart” // Romans 10:1–13 // Romans #20

**Wow, what a video.** When people ask me what the secret is of the Summit’s effectiveness, I tell them it’s not my preaching; it’s not even our great worship leaders. It’s people like Ms. Lou.

I want to **thank all of you who served in ServeRDU this year.** Raise your hand if you participated. We say every year our hope for ServeRDU is that it would be a one-week **springboard into serving year round**, just like Ms. Lou. I hope you’ll continue to build on the relationships and opportunities you encountered week.

Romans 10, if you have your Bible! (**Page 62** of your Romans journals.) **First of all, you’re back! I’m surprised.** I wasn’t sure who was going to make it back after chapter 9. I **guess all of you were predestined** to be back. Just kidding.

**Let me also welcome back our college students!** This is the first week they usually are back. Stand up. **Every year I say this:** You are a huge part of our church and our church is not the same when you are gone. **Our offering, otoh, is totally unaffected** by your absence, but that’s another matter.

**OK, Romans 10.** Romans 10 is the other side of the coin of Romans 9. The focus of Romans 9 was on God’s sovereignty in our salvation. The focus of Romans 10 is on our role in it.

**In Scripture, God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility are presented as a paradox**—which means something that, on the surface, appears contradictory but in reality is not.

In a paradox, the **only reason things seem to contradict** is that our understanding and perspective are limited.

We have **a lot of examples of paradoxes in the natural world, for example:**

- **Albert Einstein** demonstrated that **light sometimes appears** to behave like a wave and sometimes it behaves like a particle, which up until that point were mutually contradictory categories. They still aren’t exactly sure how light could be both, but that’s just because there are things about the nature of the universe we don’t get yet.<sup>1</sup>
- **Or, chaos theory in mathematics**, where numbers chosen totally at random they still form a nearly perfect symmetrical and predictable graph.
- Or, the so-called **bumblebee paradox**: For a while, physicists couldn’t understand how the bumblebee could fly. Based on what they knew about wingspan and velocity, it just didn’t add up. **Later a Cambridge zoologist**<sup>2</sup> demonstrated there were some imperceptible things happening in the stroke of their wings that enabled them to overcome the odds and fly. The bumblebee

---

<sup>1</sup> Or, you’ve got chaos theory in mathematics, where if you graph numbers chosen totally at random they still form a nearly perfect symmetrical pattern. “Chaos theory is an interdisciplinary theory stating that within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization.”

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Torkel Weis-Fogh (wise-faux)

never seemed too bothered by the scientists' objections. He just flew.

Now, I'm **not saying that the bumblebee** holds the answer to the mysteries of God's sovereignty, or that **chaos theory illuminates the secrets of God's electing providences**, only that *if apparent contradictions in nature* can be resolved with expanded knowledge, how much more should we expect that with supernatural ones?

**Paul brings up God's sovereignty in our salvation not to confuse us or even to invite us to reflect on the mysteries of God**, but to give us assurance of our salvation.

**He certainly doesn't bring up the sovereignty of God** to make us worry about whether we are elect. **The Bible never, not one time, points to God** as the reason someone rejects him.

- 2 Peter 3:9, The Lord is not willing that *any* should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
- Mt 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." Not, "I was not willing" but "you were not willing."
- Even in chapter 9 that we looked at last week, when Paul explains *why* Israel missed the gospel, he didn't say, "Well, God just didn't choose them." No, he pointed to **something about them** that made them miss the gospel (**namely** that they couldn't admit that they would never be good enough to earn God's favor), **not something about God**.

**The point is: God has given you a sincere invitation to receive him. If you reject him, that's on you. On the other hand, if you choose God, then you know God was in it. (Here's how we said it: *If any of us are saved, all the praise goes to Jesus Christ; if we are lost, all the blame goes to us.*)**

**I realize that when you try to put** all that together in your mind, it creates a tension that makes your head explode, but **let me give you something I've always found helpful**: (Incidentally, this turns out to be John Calvin's favorite verse).

**Deut 29:29**, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

- **Hear ye, hear ye, all ye wannabe theologians** (SEM students): **There are secret things**.
- **And there are revealed things**. It is arrogance and presumption to sit around speculating about secret things when simple obedience is what is commanded.
- Deut 29:29 tells me there are **things about the ways of God I'll never figure out**, at least not in this life. Maybe ever.
- **But that's ok, because God has revealed** enough for me to grasp his will and obey it.

**What Paul says about God's sovereignty in Romans 9** he says that I might be confident in what God is doing in my life--knowing that what God started in me he'll finish. **That is it's only purpose**.

(BTW, I have always thought this was helpful:

- **Martin Luther in his *Commentary on Romans*** pointed out that Paul discusses these things in Romans 9, not Romans 1. That's

because **they are not the foundation of theology** (as some Calvinists would have you believe; something you must master before you can really live the Christian life.)

- No, **they are the explanation for why the promises in Romans 8** work like they do.
- **Romans 9** is almost like a footnote for chapter 8, **Luther says**, a lifting of the divine hood to show you how you can be sure God will keep his promises.
- **Romans 9 tells you that when everything in your life feels like it is falling apart, hang on**, the God who started this good work in you will complete it.
- **Martin Luther would tell people when they wrote to him** and said, “Oh, I’m afraid I’m not elect. My faith feels so weak, and I struggle with sin so much”-- he would tell them that the doctrine of predestination only ever appears in the Bible to bring comfort, never fear.
- If you want to be saved, you can. It’s in your power to choose right now.
- OTOH, if you have been saved, you can be sure that God was in it, and you can be sure that what he’ll start he’ll finish. )

**OK, chapter 10.** Like I said, in chapter 10, Paul **shifts the focus back to our responsibility** in the salvation process.

- The **first half explains how WE** believe; the last half (which we’ll get to next week) explains our role in helping others to believe.

**(Personally, I love this passage because years ago, in my own struggle with assurance of salvation, it helped me to see the true nature of faith.** I had so many questions about,

- HAD I prayed the sinner’s prayer right?
- How strong did my faith need to be to save me?

- Had I felt sorry enough for my sins to get forgiveness?
- **This chapter, and Martin Luther’s Commentary on it**, that revealed to me the *simplicity* of faith in a way that released me from my confusion.)

**Vs. 1: Paul talks again about his genuine heartbreak** that his fellow Jews missed the gospel: **10:1 Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation.** This is no mere academic pursuit for him.

**BTW, real quick: did you notice that Paul says he is praying for them?** (You may say, “Well, Paul, if it’s all about God’s choosing, why even pray for their salvation? What difference does your prayer make?”

But, **see, that’s the point: Not even Paul, after talking about God’s sovereignty**, lets that truth keep him from recognizing the role his prayers play in bringing Jesus to others. He knows his prayers are the means by which God works in the life of others. So he doesn’t cease praying for God to open their hearts to the gospel.

**<sup>2</sup> I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**

**The Jews’ problem, he says, is not that they lacked zeal for God.** Jews were **the most zealous people** on earth. They’d put modern-day fundamentalist Muslims and Buddhists to shame...

- They had **613 written OT laws** they strictly adhered to, but they also developed a whole set of traditional customs to help ensure they didn’t break any of the 613. They called these the “hedge about the law,” (think a hedge around a pit that keeps you from

falling into it). One example: they had **39 different rules** about Sabbath-keeping, including the literal number of steps you could take before you were considered to be “working.” So they were always counting their steps. My wife has started to use that on Sundays with me. She’ll be like, “Go fix me something to drink. You’ve been standing in one place all morning.” **So if you see me...**

Paul says **the problem was that their zeal, admirable as it was**, was not pursued with an accurate knowledge about God, BC your **Zeal FOR God** is only valuable if it is attached to the right truths ABOUT God.

**BTW, this flies in the face** of one of our most cherished cultural maxims: that sincerity in religion is all that matters. Paul says, “**If ever there were a people who were sincere**, it was the Jews. But their sincerity didn’t save them.

**The Jews zeal in religion, in fact, took them a very dark place.**

Toward self-righteousness and hatred.

- **And we’ve all seen that, right?** Religiously zealous people can be the worst! Amen? (*Everyone turn to your neighbor and say...*)
- They can be violent, judgmental, bigoted, hard to be around.
- **Just look at Facebook.** If all I knew about Christianity was based on what I saw Christians post on Facebook, *I wouldn’t want to be a Christian either*. I feel like Jesus would reply to most of these posts with the simple hashtag **#whitewashedtomb #didireallydieforthis #notelect**
- **Zeal FOR God** is only valuable if it is attached to the right truths ABOUT God.
- Otherwise your zeal takes you to a bad place.

**<sup>3</sup> Since they are ignorant of the righteousness of God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God’s righteousness.**

**We went over this in chapters 2 and 3**, but at the end of the day, there are only two approaches to God.

- One is where you attempt to **establish your own righteousness**--religion that is spelled **D-O**.
- In the other righteousness is given to you as a gift, spelled **D-O-N-E**.
- And if you’re convinced you can DO ENOUGH to be accepted by God, you’ll never submit to the message about his DONE.
- **(Don’t let anyone tell you that all religions are the same**--they may all teach you to be kind and love people and tell the truth. All religions may encourage you to do good things, but the basis for doing those good things is entirely different in Christianity than every other religion.
- **In every other religion**, you do those things *to be* accepted by God; in Christianity you do those things *because you have been* accepted by God. Your DO is fueled by his DONE.
- Here’s **how we’ve explained that throughout** this series:

**Religion: I obey, therefore I will be accepted.**

**The Gospel: I am accepted, therefore I will obey.**

- **C.S. Lewis:** What separates Christianity from every other religion: grace. We obey in gratitude and love for the God who saved us, not in order to gain his favor.

<sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, **After you've received the righteousness of Christ**, you no longer need the law to give you righteousness.

And that **produces a different spirit** in you--.

- **Tony Evans** had a great illustration for his. He said that **he doesn't understand it when people are given a choice between unsweet tea and sweet tea and they choose unsweet tea**, only to add sugar to it.
- **Because have you ever tried to stir sugar into iced tea?** You put in what you think is enough and take the first sip and it tastes bitter. So you keep adding and keep stirring and you have all these little particles floating around in but it's nearly impossible to get it sweet enough. And then you get to the bottom of the glass and you have full centimeter of sugar at the bottom.
- **That's like trying to sweeten your spirit through the law**, Evans says.
- *"Many of you are trying to make it to God's heaven by stirring up your own righteousness... You are stirring as hard as you can, gotta live right today, gotta do better today, gotta go to church today, gotta give money today, and you stir and you stir and it's still not sweet. You've stirred your life the best you can, but stuff is still settling at the bottom and it's just not blending in. **The righteousness Jesus Christ offers is the end of your stirring. He'll make you into sweet tea. He is the end of the law to everyone who believes because he's already fulfilled the law for you and put his Spirit into you.**"<sup>3</sup>*

---

<sup>3</sup> Tony Evans, "How to Be Right With God." Romans 10:1-13, April 23, 2000. Edited lightly for clarity.

- After Christ credits you with his righteous record, and puts his sweet Spirit inside of you, you no longer need to add it artificially or stir your calendar frantically to establish it.

Paul continues discussing the difference in the two approaches to God, <sup>5</sup> ...Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law: The one who does these things will live by them. This is a quote from Deut 30.

**After Moses had given the law**, Moses had warned the people, *"The one who does these things will live by them."*<sup>4</sup>

**Question: Do you think that was encouraging or discouraging to them?** I'd say discouraging. Because if the man who does these things lives by them, then the man who fails to do these things will die by them.<sup>5</sup> And who has succeeded at keeping the commandments?

<sup>6</sup> But the righteousness that comes from faith speaks like this: (in an entirely different way) Do not say in your heart, "Who will go up to heaven?" that is, to bring Christ down <sup>7</sup> or, "Who will go down into the abyss?" that is, to bring Christ up from the dead. <sup>8</sup> On the contrary, what does it (the gospel) say? The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.

- **IOW, righteousness is not a quest!** You don't need to go up to the heavens in your zeal for righteousness or reach down into the depths of your heart for willpower to obey.
- And that's because **Christ--the gift-righteousness of God--**came down from heaven for you. He **went into the abyss** for you.

---

<sup>4</sup> Deut 30:16-17

<sup>5</sup> Deut 30:18-19

- You are not **saved by your zeal for him**, but his for you. **The effort was his.**
  - **He lived the perfect life.** BTW, do you ever wonder why he lived 33 years? **One theologian said because** that's how long it took to face all our temptations and succeed with them.
  - **Every test you and I failed**, he passed with flying colors.
    - In fact, **in one of the more mysterious scenes** in Jesus's life, we even see him repent for us: baptism of repentance.
    - So, **did I repent enough? No. He did for me.** He **LIVED** for me; **REPENTED** for me; **DIED** for me
- **This righteousness** is gifted to you.
  - **Learn this term from Martin Luther:** **GIFT righteousness.** Righteousness given as a gift.
  - Another term: **"alien righteousness."** Righteousness from outside of us.
  - Here's a quote from **Martin Luther** I love: **"The love of God does not first find, but rather creates, that which pleases it."** He didn't find you righteous, he *made* you righteous by the gospel.

Again, vs. 8: **~~On the contrary,~~ what does it (the gospel) say? The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.**

- **Salvation, for any of you, is now as close now as your mouth and heart--no matter how dark your circumstances, or how far you feel from God, how much shame you feel over your past, how overwhelmed you are with confusion, how bleak your prospects, **it's as close as your mouth and your heart--because salvation is simply acknowledging that Christ did what he said he did: he came down to earth for you. He went into the grave and back, for you.****

So, <sup>9</sup> **If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord,"** (that he **was the Lord of heaven** come down from heaven for you) **and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead** (that is, **that he was raised from the depths** of sin's penalty, having paid it all in full for you. If you do that), **you will be saved.**

**BTW, some people get confused and think that these are two separate things, like a part 1 and part 2 of salvation, or a two-step authentication process like so many of my devices now annoyingly require every time I sign-in to anything, **as if Paul were saying**, "First, you have to believe in your heart, and then you have to confess verbally before you can be saved"**

- Paul has been clear that **all that is necessary for salvation** is to transfer all our hopes for salvation out of our hands and into Christ's--to **add any work to it, even a verbal confession**, would be adding a work.<sup>6</sup>
- No, **Paul is using a Hebrew literary device called 'parallelism,'** where you say the same thing in 2 separate ways. If I say, You'll be married if you put a ring on her finger, if you walk an aisle and say 'I do', that's two ways of pointing to the same moment, not two separate things. These are **two ways of confessing faith**.
- **Paul uses this parallel because he assumes** that a genuine belief in the heart will produce a public proclamation on the lips. **How could it not?**

<sup>10</sup> **One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, (What's the instrument of salvatoin? With your body you get baptized? With your mouth you take the eucharist? With your feet you walk the aisle?**

---

<sup>6</sup> Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 for You*, 80.

With the wallet you give enough? No, with **your heart** you believe. That's it.) **and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.**

<sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says (Psalm 25:3), **Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame,** All those who trust in him for salvation will never be disappointed.

One of the **simplest illustrations of this is sitting in a chair.** When you sit down, you are transferring...

- Scripture says if you're in this position with the finished work of Christ, *he won't let you down.*
- **Sometimes people say:** *I don't remember.* I have this **card in my Bible** with a date on it signed by Billy Graham with my grandma's tear stains...
- Does it matter what you say to the chair?
- **It doesn't matter if you prayed, walked, got wet. Right now, are you sitting in him? ROM 10:11. ARE YOU SEATED IN ACCEPTANCE, OR STANDING...**

And Paul says, this **method of salvation creates the most inclusive community** the world has ever seen! Everyone who puts trust in God to save them will be saved:

<sup>12</sup> since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

The salvation process **does not distinguish** by ethnicity, background, education level, religious history or moral blamelessness. Everyone who calls on God's name will be saved.

**The gospel is the most inclusive religious message ever,** creating the most inclusive community that has ever existed on earth.

You say, "**Wait a minute--you've just said** that there's only one way to be saved. That doesn't sound very inclusive. It sounds exclusive."

- Yes, but first realize that all religious claims are inherently exclusive. **All of them.**
- For example, if you say, "I think **good people of every religion** go to heaven," **that sounds inclusive, right?** But **who have you excluded?** Bad people. And I suppose that you get to define who is bad. And I suppose racists, misogynists, and child molesters, are on that list...
  - **If you're morally conservative,** you probably put sexually deviant people on the list
  - Or, **if you're liberal,** you probably put people who judge others for their sexuality on that list.
  - But no one looks at the racist or the rapist and says, "Well, my truth says you shouldn't do that, but that's your truth and I respect it."
  - **We all have a list of what is good and right and what is not.**
  - **Everyone has a line** for who is in and who is out. They are **all exclusive.**
- But the gospel of Jesus, you see, offers a **different kind of exclusivity,** because the gospel teaches that our acceptance with God is not based on anything about us. God **gives salvation as a gift** to all who will repent and receive it in humility and faith.
- And **that produces a different kind of exclusivity.** It's a humble exclusivity.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Original from Tim Keller

- Listen: What made the gospel in the first century scandalous was **not whom it excluded, but whom it included.**
  - **According to the Talmud**--a collection of Jewish traditions--each morning a Jewish man would pray, "Thank God I'm not a woman, a slave, or a Gentile." MALE, JEWISH, PRIVILEGE. When we went through Acts, I pointed out the irony that when Paul, a Jewish rabbi, goes to start a church in Philippi, the first 3 converts were...
  - The gospel alone produces this kind of inclusivity.
- **Which is why the gospel has produced the most demographically inclusive community the world has ever seen.**
  - **Islam is still predominantly Arab**; to become a Muslim you basically have to become culturally Arab.
  - **Buddhism is still predominantly East Asian.**
  - **Hinduism is still predominantly South Asian.**
  - But Christians are now evenly split between Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. It is **growing the fastest now in Latin America, Asia and Africa!**
- Like every other religious claim, Christianity is exclusive. But it's the most inclusive exclusivism there ever was!
- If your idea of **heaven on earth** is a group of white, American, English speaking Christians, you won't enjoy heaven that much. Every time you pray, you pray to a brown-skinned, Middle Eastern refugee. So, I'd think twice before disdaining someone like that.

**One final thought before I close our time in this passage:** This passage as much as any other emphasizes that **Christianity is a word-based faith.**

- Salvation, Paul says, is **all about believing a word declared** from heaven.

- It's always been this way: In the beginning, **God created** with the word.
- **Jesus healed by his words:** He would say, "Rise up and walk," and if the lame would believe that word and obey it, they would be healed.
- **Even after becoming a Christian,** the amount of God's power is directly proportional to the amount of his word that is in you.

## MUSIC

- **This was Martin Luther's great discovery** from the book of Romans. He had started studying the book of Romans searching for a pathway out of despair, a way to know he was **right with God.** (he was teaching it to others)
  - This **passage here in Romans 10** taught him that salvation came from simply **believing the word declared from heaven** that Jesus had paid the price for his sin. He said that **believing this word** set his soul free.
  - Religious leaders of his day felt threatened by this discovery, because they wanted **the church to control salvation.** It gave them the power to control people's behavior.
  - So **they demanded** that he take back what he wrote.
  - **One of the religious leaders, Cardinal Cajetan, threatened to imprison Luther—even burn him at the stake—if he wouldn't recant his teaching** that salvation came from just believing the word of the gospel.
  - At Luther's trial, Cardinal Cajetan told Luther he could walk free if he would utter just **one little word: revoco** ("I recant"). **"Just one little word," Cajetan said, "will save you."**



- **Luther responded:** *“This much I know, I would be the most beloved person (in the Empire) if I were to say the simple word ‘revoco’. ... But how can I deny the power through which I have been made a Christian?”*
- **Later he penned the words to the famous hymn,** “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” **undoubtedly thinking** about this conversation with Cardinal Cajetan:

*And though this world, with devils filled / Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God has willed / His truth to triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim / We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure / For lo! his doom is sure;  
**One little word** shall fell him.*

**Instead of responding with the Latin word *revoco*, Luther responded with the word *credo*, which means “I believe.”**

Saying “revoco” might free me from your prison, Luther said, but saying “I believe” **connects me to the power of God**. I’d rather be in **your prison** with his power than a free man without it...

Luther knew something we often forget: that one little word of faith connects us to the power behind an empty tomb.

- Just saying it (from the heart), Paul says here in Romans 10:9–19, makes the sinner righteous.
- **It releases the powers of salvation in you:** It makes the lame walk, the blind see, the dead live. It brings power into your parenting, hope into your trials, and strength into your soul.
- **Remember, the gospel is the only thing referred to as the power of God...**

***That word** above all earthly powers / No thanks to them abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours / Through him who with us sideth:  
Let goods and kindred go / This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill / God’s truth abideth still;  
His kingdom is forever!*

- So when you are **unsure of your salvation**, *speak that word... I BELIEVE ROM 10:9, 11*
- So when you **feel overwhelmed by circumstances**, *speak that word... I BELIEVE THE GOD FIGHTING FOR ME IS GREATER THAN THE FORCES ARRAYED AGAINST ME AND THERE IS NO SHADOW OF TURNING IN HIM*
- When you face **addictions you can’t overcome**, *speak that word... 1 JOHN 4:4*
- When hear those voices of **condemnation**, telling you that you are not enough, *speak that word... NOTHING WILL SEPARATE ME*
- When your tells you **you’re a failure**, or you feel all alone, *speak that word I BELIEVE HE WILL NEVER LEAVE ME OR FORSAKE ME AND I CAN DO ALL THINGS*

And, to speak that word, you gotta know that word. So, in addition to coming in hear, SATURATE

- **Read it daily.** Start your day with it. **Most valuable. I make sure i believe the gospel.**
- **Memorize it**
- **Saturate yourself with it: Listen to sermons** driving around. Podcasts/105.7

**Invitation:** *Are you ready to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior?*

