

“Foundations: Salvation and Faith”

Romans 10:9-13

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Scripture: Romans 10:9-13

Sermon:

Introduction

Has anybody here ever flown on an airplane? Please put up your hand. I want you to imagine that you're going on a flight. **[pic]** Suppose you're flying out of Toronto Pearson airport. Imagine yourself sitting by the gate waiting for your plane to board. As you look around, you see a number of your fellow passengers. You see a family with two young children. The kids are excited about the flight. They're eagerly looking out the window of the terminal at the plane on the tarmac. You see a businessman in a suit, typing away on a laptop for the last few minutes before boarding. Flying is “old hat” for him. You see an elderly couple looking at pictures of someplace warm in a brochure. They seem excited about their final destination. Then you notice a man who looks very nervous. In fact, he seems quite agitated and he starts pacing up and down the hallway, glancing out the window at the plane.

When the time comes for your flight to board, you get up and wait in line to show the flight attendant your ticket. As you walk down the gangplank towards the plane, you see the agitated man in front of you. Clearly his anxiety is rising!

[pic] You find your seat on the plane and watch as other people board. You see the family with kids. The kids are not excitedly looking out the window at the wings and engines of the plane. You see the elderly couple, snuggling close as they prepare for the trip of a lifetime. The business man already has his laptop back out, trying to get a few more things done before he has to turn it off for take off. **[pic]** You look around but don't see the anxious man. Then you realize he's sitting in the seat behind you! You can hear him talking to whoever is in the seat next to him. He is telling his seatmate that he has always been afraid of flying, but his father is sick in the hospital and he has to get home quickly if he is to say his goodbyes to his dad. You hear the woman sitting next to him express her condolences.

Over the course of your flight, you hear bits a pieces of the conversation taking place behind you. As it turns out, the woman behind you is an aeronautics engineer! **[pic]** What a perfect person to be sitting next to a person afraid of flying, right? Over the course of your flight, you hear her asking questions as to why the man is afraid of flying. She gently points out the different parts of the plane. You even hear her explain how lift works, which is the physics behind powered flight. As she gently explains how flight works, the man behind you seems to calm down a bit. But then, when you get up to go to the bathroom, you notice the man behind you still has his armrest in a death grip, his white knuckles practically popping through his skin!

Once your plane lands, you all file out of the plane, back up a different gangplank and into a new terminal. You see the kids running ahead to the baggage claim. The business man swiftly walks towards the taxi stand. The elderly couple move along to a connecting flight. The anxious man is clearly calming down now that he's back on “solid ground,” taking deep breaths and regaining his colour.

All of these people represent different responses or different manifestations of faith. What do I mean by that? They all demonstrate different responses or attitudes to trust. Each person on the plane exercised a degree of trust. They demonstrated trust and belief in the physics of flight. They demonstrated trust in the pilot and crew of the plane. They demonstrated trust in the airline mechanics who maintain the plane. **Each person on the plane made a personal commitment of trust. They put their lives in the hands of others and in ideas about the laws of physics.**

For the kids, their faith was a grand adventure. They were excited about the journey itself. For the elderly couple, the flight was a means to an end. The flight was a necessary part of getting to their exciting destination. For the businessman, the flight was taken for granted, it was merely a tool necessary for accomplishing his job. For the anxious man, the flight was a severe test and trauma. But regardless of their response to the flight, they all exercised faith. They all believed that the flight would arrive safely at their destination. They all believed that the laws of physics would be the same today as every other day. They all believed that the plane and its crew were

properly maintained and trained. And, based on those beliefs, they all made a personal commitment to those beliefs by boarding the plane.

Faith is a combination of intellectual beliefs and personal commitment. Notice the second part-personal commitment. It is entirely possible for a person to sit in the airport and watch the planes take off and land, totally believing in the physics of flight and the integrity of the equipment and crews, but still not be willing to make the personal commitment to board a plane himself. Faith is not just mental assent to facts or ideas, it also includes a personal commitment to those facts or ideas.

Now, that being said, different people experience faith differently. Some people make the personal commitment without knowing much about the facts behind their commitment, such as the excited children in our example. Some people know a great deal about the facts behind the commitment, like the aeronautical engineer. Some people are willing to make the personal commitment even in spite of their intellectual or emotional misgivings, like the person afraid of flying. In some ways, his faith commitment was greater than any of the other people on the plane. He committed himself to flying even though he was terrified!

We make faith commitments every day. We make faith commitments when we take our car to the garage to be serviced. We make faith commitments when we drive away from the garage assuming they did, in fact, fix our breaks! We make faith commitments when we eat out at restaurants, when we ride in elevators, when we buy food in the grocery store. We regularly make personal commitments based on beliefs we hold to be true. We regularly exercise trust in people and ideas we don't know first-hand.

But what about religious faith? What about Christian faith? What does it mean when the Bible says we are "saved by faith"? What does it mean to be a person of faith? As we explore this topic together today, remember that the word faith means a combination of both intellectual belief and personal commitment.

Context

The passage we are reading today is taken from Romans 10. Last week, we looked at Romans 3 in which Paul speaks of the Atonement, the mechanism through which Jesus paid for our sins, for our wrongdoing. Remember, though, that even there Paul speaks about faith. In fact, the NT repeatedly speaks of our salvation coming through faith. Today, our passage doesn't actually use the word "faith." What's up with that?!?

However, our text does use the word "believe" and, like last week, this is a trick of English. **Belief and faith come from the same word in Greek.** Part of the problem in English is that faith is only a noun, and faithful is an adjective, but there is no verb for faith, no "action word" for faith. So for the verb we use the word believe. But in English, the noun belief typically carries with it the idea of intellectual assent only, not the personal commitment and action that the Greek word for faith carries with it. So we're stuck again, like with the words justification and righteousness, having to keep track in our minds as we read that belief and faith are the same in Greek, and therefore the same in Paul's mind.

In our passage today, Paul is talking about righteousness, about how we get into a right relationship with God. He is specifically talking about how the Law for the Israelites failed to make anybody righteous because nobody can follow it perfectly. He makes some connections with the OT and the Christian message of faith, which is "the word of faith we are proclaiming..." (v. 8) What is this word of faith, or the message of faith? Let's take a look.

Text

Please turn with me to Romans 10:9-13.

Observations

This is a marvellous passage. It takes the core beliefs of Christianity and sums them up nicely in terms of our own response to God's salvation offered in Christ. **The two components required to be a Christian are confessing and believing.** Paul says this twice from verse 9 to 10. 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. That's verse 9. Verse 10 elaborates, explaining that it is with your heart that you believe (notice, it is not with your head that you believe! But more on that in a minute.) and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. Simple, right?

So let's unpack what it means. First, consider what it means to "confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord." Confession means more than just saying something. Confessing means saying something you hold to be

true. I can say, “The earth is flat,” and not believe that to be true. That’s not a confession. **Confession is the outward manifestation of the critical inner response of belief.** [Douglas Moo, *Romans*, p. 657] When we think of it that way, in fact, it becomes clear that there is really only 1 component required to be a Christian-belief! There is no value to saying “Jesus is Lord” on the outside of there is no committed belief to that on the inside.

As an aside, this is in stark contrast to Islam. In Islam, to say the words, in Arabic, “There is but one God and Mohammed is his prophet,” is sufficient to form one of the pillars of salvation for Muslims. Therefore, sometimes Muslims will try to get Christians to say the words in Arabic, not knowing their full meaning, thinking that they are making a Muslim convert when there is no internal commitment in the person’s heart.

But what does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord? What does the word “Lord” mean? Today, especially in North America, we don’t use the word Lord much at all. In England, they still have Lords and Ladies, so there it is a sign of special rank and a term of authority and respect. But what did Paul mean when he used the word Lord?

In Greek usage, the word Lord could be used merely as a term of respect. Some people in the Gospels are reported as referring to Jesus as “Lord” in this way. They use it as a term of respect for a teacher. But certainly that is not what Paul had in mind! Another use of the word Lord was the title for Roman emperors! That was an incredible term of respect and authority. In fact, throughout the Roman Empire, all residents were required to make an annual sacrifice to Caesar and say, “Caesar is Lord.” This was a sign of their loyalty to the Empire. Later on, when emperors started proclaiming themselves to be gods, this sacrifice and statement took on an even deeper meaning. In fact, the third use of the word Lord in Greek was to refer to the Greek Gods, like “Lord Zeus” or “Lord Ares.” [William Barclay, *Romans*, p. 163]

Jews were exempted from this annual sacrifice requirement, and so early Christians were exempted too, being seen as a sect of Judaism. But after the destruction of the temple in AD 70 the Jewish community distanced itself from Christianity and all other fringe sects of Judaism. From that point on, Christians had a dilemma. Would they confess Caesar as Lord? Or was only Jesus Lord?

Lastly, and probably most significantly for Paul, Lord was the word used in the Greek translation of the OT whenever the Hebrew word Yahweh was found. [Barclay, p. 164] We still do that today in English. When you see the word LORD in all caps, it means this was the proper name for God in Hebrew. In Latin, the word is Jehovah. In English it is Lord. In Greek it was Lord as well.

What does this mean? It means that **to confess Jesus as Lord means to declare him to be God and to declare your loyalty to his authority above all earthly authorities, including Caesar.** And it means to be fully committed to this idea, not merely to say the words in an empty fashion in order to score points with your hearers.

So we see that part of confession is the inward commitment of loyalty to Jesus. This links us, again, to belief in the heart. Let me make three observations about Paul’s statements about belief. Keep in mind that belief, here, is the same as the word faith.

First, notice that we believe, or have faith in our hearts. In our culture we use the word “heart” to mean the emotions. Sometimes, we even use the word heart as a contrast with our head and mind. But in the ancient world heart meant much more than that. **The heart includes the emotions, but also the intellect, the will, the desires, preferences and imagination.** So right off the bat we see that Paul is talking about something much deeper than just how we feel. It isn’t enough to have strong feelings about Jesus. Your faith, your belief, must encompass your mind, your will, your desires, preferences and your imagination as well as your feelings.

So you can start to see the thorough nature of faith or belief. If you believe in your head that God raised Jesus from the dead, but it has no effect on your will, your desires or your imagination, then you’re not believing with your heart. If you don’t really believe in your head that God raised Jesus from the dead, but you have strong feelings that you wish it were true, or you have strong, positive feelings for Jesus, that isn’t believing with your heart either.

Second, what belief is it that is to consume your heart? That God raised Jesus from the dead. Why is that significant? Because it carries with it the idea of the Atonement. God raised Jesus from the dead because Jesus was without sin, yet paid the penalty of sin- death. The resurrection vindicates Jesus. It is God’s way of

saying that Jesus was who he said he was, the Saviour and the Son of God. Furthermore, the resurrection demonstrates that death has been defeated. It demonstrates that the power of sin has been broken. It is the resurrection of Jesus, more so even than his death, that gives us hope for our salvation. Theoretically, I suppose, Jesus could have died for our sins without the resurrection, but nobody would know it! Had Jesus not been raised from the dead, his death would have looked just like any other. He would have been forgotten in history as just another radical, revolutionary teacher in first century Israel. So **belief in the resurrection means belief in all the mechanics of the payment for sin, the defeat of death, the deity of Jesus and the potential for our salvation**. And this is more than just paying lip service to these things. Belief in the resurrection means a whole hearted commitment to these things in mind, emotions, will, desires, preferences and imagination.

Third, what is the result of such all-consuming belief? What is the result of such a radical commitment of one's whole self to the belief in the resurrection and all that it implies? The result is justification. What is that? Remember, **justification is the process through which we are put in a right relationship with God**. It is the same as the word righteousness. It is through our whole-hearted commitment of our full self to the resurrection of Jesus that we are put back into a right relationship with God, which is the entire problem of sin- that our relationship with God has been destroyed resulting in our eventual, eternal separation from Him.

Paul closes off his description of what it means to be a Christian by saying it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. He is restating what he has just said. It is with our mouth that we make the outward declaration of our whole-hearted, all-consuming commitment to the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead. That commitment leads to being justified, which means being restored to a right relationship with God, which means we are saved from the consequences of our sin- death.

The next few verses are references to OT passages that point towards this new kind of righteousness that comes from God. Anyone who trusts in God will not be put to shame and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, or the character of the Lord, will be saved. This means that it isn't just for Jews to be saved. It is possible for anyone who calls on the Lord to be saved. It also means that we have a responsibility to call on the name of the Lord! We have a responsibility to trust in God.

Interpretation

Now, that's a lot to chew on! Who knew that such simple words as confess, Lord, believe and heart carried with them so much content? So what does it all mean? What are we to make of this? How do we interpret it?

It all boils down to what it means to be a Christian. **This is what it means to put your faith in Christ**: The confession that Jesus is Lord means acknowledging that "Jesus shares the name and the nature, the holiness, the authority, power, majesty and eternity of the one and only true God... and His ownership of those who acknowledge Him and their consciousness of being His property." [CEB Cranfield, in George Ladd, *NT Theology*, p. 187] Lord is a statement of personal allegiance. **To confess Jesus as Lord is to make him your boss of bosses in all areas of your life because he is God**. Whether you mean it as a term of respect or a reference to God, it means you are acknowledging the other's authority. When you use it to mean God, his authority is so complete that to call Jesus Lord means a total commitment of yourself, your life, your priorities, your goals, your money, your time and your skills to serving him. This is the kind of commitment that confessing Jesus as Lord carries with it.

To believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead means to have trust and commitment in every aspect of your being that God brings salvation through Jesus alone. To date, the resurrection is a unique event. We're going to look at the resurrection more closely next week, but for now, understand that Jesus' resurrection is more than just being brought back to life. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but Lazarus wasn't resurrected. The resurrection includes a transformation of the physical body, not just a restoration of it.

This means that you don't just commit to Jesus as a good teacher, as a moral prophet or guide. You commit yourself to Jesus as your only means to be saved from the eternal consequences of you sin in the future and the indwelling power of sin in the present. To believe in, to put your "faith in Christ means personal identification with him." [Ladd, p. 308] It is more than acknowledging facts. "It means the response of the whole person to the revelation that has been given in Christ." [Ladd, p. 308]

In the resurrection of Christ, God defeated death and sin. This is the foundation of our salvation. This is the grounds of our justification. **Jesus' resurrection is why we can be justified in the first place**. Faith in Jesus,

the whole-hearted, all-encompassing commitment of oneself to him for our justification is how we make use of, is how we make personal application of this justification that comes from God. **Faith is the means by which justification becomes effective for an individual.**

God did the work of justification “out there” through Jesus, the Atonement and the Resurrection. He did that all completely apart from us, without our help or input. It is all objective, or outside of us. Faith is subjective. That is, faith is the part in us that takes what God did “out there” and brings it to us, to transform us and apply God’s justification to us so that we can be reconciled to God.

Putting out faith in Christ, that process by which we take what God did and apply it to ourselves, is the “acceptance of this work of God in Christ, complete reliance upon it, and an utter abandonment of one’s own works as the grounds of justification.... The ground of my justification is nothing within me, either righteousness of mind or attitude or will; it is the objective work of Christ in his death. Faith is the means by which the work of Christ is personally appropriated.” [Ladd, p. 490]

To put this in perspective, let’s go back to the example of taking a flight. When you board the plane, you commit yourself fully to the care of the flight crew and the airplane. You put your complete trust in it to get you where you need to go. You do not participate in the flight whatsoever. You can’t get out and push. You can’t flap your arms to help give the plane lift. If you took a bicycle on the plane, and started riding it up and down the aisle of the plane, it wouldn’t get you to your destination any faster. You couldn’t claim that you had contributed to the journey. You couldn’t take credit for part of the work done in flying you to where you wanted to go.

In the same way, when you put your faith in Christ, you must do so fully. It does you no good to flap your arms or ride a bike or get out and push. Putting your faith in Christ for your salvation means abandoning all your own attempts at salvation. It means giving up all your own attempts to win God’s favour. It means giving up your own righteousness, your own thoughts, feelings and attempts to put yourself in a right relationship with God.

Now Apply It

So, if that’s what it means to put your faith in Jesus Christ, how do we apply this? How do we take this home with us?

Let me begin by clarifying what it means to have justifying faith. Paul says that when we believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, we are justified. Remember at the beginning when I said we exercise faith in lots of areas, including secular areas like flying? There are also other kinds of faith within religion, even within Christianity. So let me start out our application section with a warning.

First, there is such thing as historical faith. **Historical faith means believing in the truths of the Bible based on their divine authority.** [Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*, p. 215] This is not, in and of itself, justifying faith. This is merely mental assent to the truth. This is a necessary part of justifying faith, it is an important first step, but it is not justifying faith. How do I know? Because even the devil and the demons know the truth of the Bible. Even the demons cried out when they saw Jesus and knew that he was God!

There is such thing as temporary faith. [Watson, p. 215] In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus talks about those who hear the word of God gladly at first, but they have a shallow faith, a shallow commitment and when trouble comes their faith withers and dies. Others head the word and the seed starts to grow, but the cares of this world choke out the seed, choke out their faith. Of the four types of soil in the parable, two of them represent different kinds of temporary faith.

There is even such thing as miraculous faith, by which people are able to perform miracles, but this is not justifying faith. [Watson, p. 215] Jesus warned us in Matthew 7:22-23, “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” Think of the case of Judas, one of the Twelve disciples. When Jesus sent the Twelve out into the towns and villages to heal the sick, don’t you think the other 11 would have gotten suspicious if Judas was the only one who couldn’t perform miracles? Don’t you think they would have recorded that in the Gospels? So clearly even Judas, who betrayed Jesus, had a miraculous faith. Even Judas was able to perform miracles in Jesus’ name, but his faith was not justifying faith!

So what, then, is justifying faith? What kind of faith do we need to have to be saved? **True justifying faith has three components: self-renunciation, reliance on Jesus alone to save and applying Christ to**

ourselves. [Watson, p. 216]

Self-renunciation means recognizing, accepting and acknowledging that we have no righteousness of our own. There is nothing in us to make God say we are ok. There is nothing in us to make our relationship with God right. God may say he loves us, but that doesn't mean our relationship with him is good. Self-renunciation means stopping thinking, acting and living like we can be good enough or do enough good to make God happy enough with us to say our relationship with him is on good terms. We talked about this last week with the Atonement. Christianity is different from all other religions in that in Christianity there is nothing we can do to bring about our salvation.

Reliance on Jesus alone to save us means recognizing that, while our situation is quite severe in that we have nothing in ourselves to bring about salvation, there is something in Jesus to bring about our salvation. Jesus is the grounds of our salvation. He is why we can be saved. The first part of justifying faith is recognizing "I have nothing when it comes to righteousness and salvation." The second part is recognizing "Jesus has everything when it comes to righteousness and salvation" and putting your whole trust in that righteousness of Jesus to fix your relationship with God.

The third part of justifying faith is actually applying Jesus to ourselves. God has given us the cure to the problem of sin. We have to actually take the medication. It's no good to just put Jesus on the shelf of our spiritual medicine cabinet and let him sit there. We need to actually apply him to ourselves. We have to invite Jesus into every facet of our hearts. We have to submit our mind, our emotions, our will, our desires, our preferences and imaginations to Jesus and let him clean them up and restore them to reflect our newfound righteousness with God.

To stretch the analogy of the plane from the beginning, Jesus is the flight crew and the airplane both. We can sit in the airport and say, "I can't get to Hawaii on my own. That plane can get me there though. I believe in the physics of flight and the safety of that plane," but unless we actually get on the plane and let the plane take us there, we won't be saved.

Some people get on the plane and are excited about the ride. Some people get on the plane absolutely terrified. Some people understand the parts of the plane. Others even understand the physics of flight. But regardless of your level of understanding, you must put your trust in the plane and commit yourself by boarding it. [pic] Some people who are struggling to make that commitment need to have flight explained to them before they can put their faith in the plane. Others need to have help with their anxiety addressed in terms of trust. Intellectual understanding alone isn't enough. They need to find emotional healing that will allow them to trust. Maybe that comes by spending time with people who fly a lot, or by spending time with pilots, or even just in the airport. Some people need to be healed before they can trust Jesus. Maybe that comes from spending time with Christians, maybe it comes from spending time in God's word learning about Jesus, maybe it comes from spending time in church. But however you get to the point of commitment, we are all responsible for making that commitment and getting on the plane. [pic]

So where is your faith? Do you have faith? What kind of faith is it? Have you put your whole trust in Jesus? Have you made him your Lord? Do you believe with every aspect of your heart that God raised him from the dead? Have you surrendered all your own attempts to justify yourself with God? Have you applied Jesus to yourself? If not, what's stopping you? You're missing out on the greatest flight to the best destination you could ever imagine. Amen.