

## **Romans 10:8-13 God's Word Is Near You! Lent 1 February 14, 2016**

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Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ in whose name we are saved! Amen.

We read from Paul's letter to the Romans 10:8-13.

These are Your Words heavenly Father to help us value Your saving Word for our faith. Your Word is truth.

Dear Christians, in the name of Christ,

What makes Christians different than non-Christians? Is it that Christians pray more often? Is it that we swear less and tell the truth more? Is it that we don't get drunk or abusive toward others? Is the difference in Christians and non-Christians that we go to church more often? Last Wednesday, I preached about Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and tax collector. The Pharisee did all the things that I mentioned above: he prayed, he watched his language, never got drunk, and he went to church all the time. Yet, he left the temple without forgiveness and remained under God's judgment and eternal death.

What makes us different as Christians? It is our faith which holds to Jesus alone. What is Jesus to us? Is He our God and Lord in whom we trust, serve and obey or just a name that we use without thinking? At the end of our lives will Jesus be the Rock that lifts us up from judgment to heaven or will He be the Rock that crushes us in judgment? The answer is found in God Word. *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* (v.13) God has made clear in His Word that Jesus is the only way to life. And God's Word alone can keep us in the saving faith in Christ. Every day we should be thankful that

### **God's Word Is Near You!**

**First, His Word led us to salvation through faith in our hearts.** Paul wrote, *"It is with your heart that you believe and are justified."* (v.10) What is saving faith? Everyone has faith in something in this world either in science or doctors or family. But, our Christian faith is based on God's truth. To believe in our hearts, we must know Jesus. It sounds simple to us, but how many people in the world don't know Jesus as the Son of God and man. How many people don't know why Jesus died on the cross? In our area, probably 25% of the people don't know. In Oregon on the west coast it would be a high estimate to say that 25% of the people know why Jesus died. More people knew at one time. What happened? One generation to the next didn't pass on the truth of Christ. It is in our human nature to think that faith will just automatically transfer to another generation. But, we can see in the Old Testament history of Israel that didn't happen. One generation would be godly, depending on the judge or king and the next would worship everything under heaven but God. True faith can be lost or never formed if the message of Christ is not heard. For our own faith and for the continued faith for those we love we need to remember: *"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."* (Romans 10:17)

Faith is not just a matter to knowing. It is a confidence in Christ alone. Again it is in our nature to want to add something of our own to our salvation. Paul wrote about that earlier, *"Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the deep?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."* (10:6-7) Imagine people bold or foolish enough to think that they could go up to God in heaven to bring Christ down to us or that they had power to reach Christ when He was dead and help Him come to life? Those things are impossible for mere humans to do! On top of that, Christ has already, of His own free will, come down from heaven. He has already died for our sins and was raised to life by God in victory. Just as we couldn't help Christ save us, so we cannot add anything to our own salvation. Christ has completed all that was needed for us to be saved! Paul wrote, *"This is the word of faith we are proclaiming."* (v.8) By God's Word we place our confidence in Christ by faith alone!

**Second, when God's Word is near us it calls for a response.** This old saying is still true. We are saved by faith alone in Christ, without one work of our own. Yet, true saving faith is never alone. Jesus said that a good fruit tree will have good fruit. So, true faith will express itself by confessing the truth. Paul wrote, *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* (v.9) James wrote that *"Faith, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."* (James 2:17) But, when we think about the things we say or do, we may wonder if we have true faith? We must fight our sinful nature that the Apostle Paul described, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature."* (Romans 7:18) How many times have we failed to do what is right? How often have we said too much? How many times are our thoughts controlled by anger, jealousy, or selfish ambition? And how many other foolish or rebellious things have we done against God to make us doubt if we have faith?

That is why we need the Word of God near us! It reminds us daily, *"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) Page 3 God's Word also helps us recall the power of our baptism into Christ, *"You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."* (1 Corinthians 6:11) We need this motivation to be able to properly confess the name of Christ as our Savior. God's Word puts down our sinful pride and helps us focus more and more on Christ to help us confess our trust in Him. Paul quoted Isaiah 28, *"Everyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame."* (v.11)

No one likes to be embarrassed in front of others. How much worse it will be for an unbeliever who has to stand before God on Judgment Day with no excuse for sins and no one to intercede? But, we have Christ who has taken away all our sins. He is the one Mediator between God and us. (1 Timothy 2:5) With our hearts we believe God's Word and are *"justified"* and with our mouths we confess our faith and are *"saved."* (v.10) We have nothing to fear on Judgment Day as long as God's Word is near us and we hold to Christ. Jesus said, *"He who confesses Me before men, I will confess before My Father in heaven."* (Matt 12)

**Third, God's Word near us but it is a word intended for all.** From the time of Adam and Eve's son Seth, people have been calling on the name of the Lord. They have been worshiping the true God with faith that cannot help but show itself before other people. Later in history, although God chose Abraham and his descendents, He intended that he and believers of any age would let the light His Word shine to all people. Paul wrote, *"There is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him."* (v.12)

But, it is easy for us to want to exclude people from God's kingdom. We have people we don't like. We have people that we think don't deserve a place in heaven. But, God doesn't want exclude anyone. He so loved everyone in the world that He sent His only Son to die for all. He wants all to be saved. Sadly, many people won't be. May it not be because we didn't say anything when we had an opportunity! May it not be that our actions were so bad that it kept someone from hearing about Christ! God could have so easily kept us out of heaven. He could have held all kinds of things against us and has every right to exclude us.

Yet, *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*(v.13) So, we daily confess our sins to God and with His Word near us we have complete salvation in Christ for us and for all people. We live by faith and confess our faith in our words and actions. We pray that many more people in our area, our country, or around the world will have the Word of Christ near them that they by faith may be saved. Amen.