

The Simple Plan of Salvation

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[0:00] Well, Romans chapter 10. Romans chapter 10 and find verse 4. In fact, I'm going to read verses 4 through 13.

That's how far we're going to get here tonight. Romans chapter 10, starting with verse 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law. The man, and this is what he writes, this is a quote, the man who does those things shall live by them, that is by the law.

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way. Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? That is to bring Christ down from above. Or who will descend into the abyss, the depths? That is to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? That is what does faith say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith which we preach.

[1:28] That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

For the scripture says, whoever believes on him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon him.

For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. That is a tremendous passage, isn't it? In fact, a number of the verses that we have there that I just read to you are very familiar.

In fact, a few of them probably have been memorized by many of you. That is a tremendous passage. And what can we learn about it?

Well, what we learn here is the simple, very simple plan of salvation. Very simple. And the plan of redemption, the plan of salvation is simple.

[2:44] Though we have made it, I think, complicated. Now, when I was in college, the one thing that I dreaded every time I attended class was to hear the teacher say, Class, take out a piece of paper.

It's time for a pop quiz. You remember those days? Some of you are teachers in here. Maybe you do such dastardly things to your class. You know, pop quiz time.

I just hated that. And generally I did because I just wasn't ready, ever, hardly, in college. And so, this is what I'm going to do tonight. I'm going to play that part.

Class? Well, you don't have to take out a piece of paper. But, pop quiz time. In fact, we'll call this a theological quiz.

All right? And it's multiple choice. Don't you like multiple choice? I don't. I hate them. Give me something that I could write two or three pages on and I'm fine.

[3:50] But, multiple choice, true, false, hated those things. But this is multiple choice. Okay? Here's the question. How good must a person be in order to go to heaven?

A. Pretty good. That's A. B. As good as you can be. You know, just give it your best shot.

C. More good than bad. That sound good? D. Better than your Uncle Joe or Aunt Martha.

I know the names may be different, but every one of us has an uncle or an aunt that are believers.

That's D. E. Perfect.

Perfect. Perfect. All right? Now, just be careful. Don't answer out loud. You might embarrass yourself.

[4:55] The answer is E. I know some of you are wishing there was an F. None of the above. We're always like that, don't we? Okay.

Yes. The teacher's pet. Oh, Wes, is he the teacher's pet? No. No.

Although all I have to do is say, Amen, he's like, Amen. You know. But the answer is E. In order to go to heaven, you have to be perfect.

You have to be perfect. Not almost perfect. Perfect. Not 99.9%. Perfect. By the way, how do you think the world would answer the little quiz?

A lot of them would say, well, they might say, be as good as you can be. Many would say that. You know, just do the best you can.

[6:04] And, you know, God knows the sincerity of your heart. And he knows that you're not perfect. And just do the very best you can. And God will honor that. That's how many would answer that question today.

And not only that, but there would be those who would say, more good than bad. As if, you know, the old E.E. illustration, the scales, you know. Good, bad, and hopefully the good will outweigh the bad and you'll make it in.

You know. There are people, there are a lot of people who think that. Believe that. And a host of other kind of answers. And really, D, I throw that in there.

It may be a little comical, but better than Uncle Joe or Aunt Martha. Typically, a person will just select someone that they think they could be better than, you know.

Well, anyway. The answer is E. The answer is perfect. And, by the way, the Bible makes it clear that God judges perfect based upon Jesus.

[7:10] Romans 3.23, which is another very familiar passage. In fact, we're going to see in chapter 10, one of the famous Roman road verses.

Romans 3.23 says, all have sinned. All have. All have sinned. All have broken God's laws. All have fallen short. That is, you don't measure up.

Don't meet the standard of the glory of God. That's bad news. God demands perfection. He does. And God will not allow imperfection into His heaven. And if you've taken the, you know, been trained in faith, that's the I, isn't it?

Impossible. Remember that, some of you faith people? Impossible for God to allow sin into heaven. And so, if you want to go to heaven, you have to be perfect.

[8:07] And so, from birth to death and every day in between, you cannot fail. If you're going to choose this route. God's standard is absolute perfection.

Every thought, every word, every deed, everything. And do you know what that means? You have to be perfect 100% of the time. Or, find someone who's willing to be perfect for you.

To do all that for you. And that, of course, is the option we have to take, isn't it?

Because, you know, option one is no longer available to any of us here in this room tonight. I don't think we have anybody here who's been perfect. Huh?

So, that option is not available. We blew that a long time ago. In fact, it was impossible at the get-go to be perfect in that sense.

[9:15] And yet, with God, it's pass or fail. And that is, keep the law perfectly and go to heaven. Or mess up just once and go to hell. I'm sorry, but that's it.

Pass or fail. I came across this illustration, I think, kind of captures it. Though all illustrations, you understand, fall short. At some point, they break down.

But here's the illustration. I'll read it to you. Suppose an eccentric rich man offers \$1 million to any person who can swim from San Diego, California, to Honolulu, Hawaii.

Long way. And the rules are simple. You have to get in the water in San Diego. And you can't get out until you reach the beach in Honolulu.

And you cannot stop or rest or have anyone assist you in any way. You can't use any mechanical or electronic devices to help you. You have to swim straight through without stopping.

[10:19] And if you do, you win \$1 million. If you don't make it or if you don't follow the rules, you get nothing. Well, on the appointed day, and this is just a story, of course, not true.

On the appointed day, no one showed up because the challenge is impossible to meet. And so the rich man raises the prize to \$10 million. And still no takers.

Finally, he raises the total to \$100 million. And on the appointed day, 10,000 people show up because that's a lot of money. And even if you can't do it, you never know what might happen.

The gun sounds and everyone hits the water at once. A few people turn back after 200 yards because they can't swim. And they just wanted the money.

Pretty stupid. A few others drop out after five miles because they've been bitten by sharks. Still others get tangled in the seaweed and have to stop.

[11 : 22] And by the 20-mile mark, only 150 swimmers are left. By the 50-mile mark, only 10 are left. Five others drop out in the next 30 miles.

And at the 100-mile mark, two swimmers are still in the water. Then only one is left. A woman who won two Olympic medals for distance swimming.

And finally, she gives up, after swimming, an amazing 215 miles. When she was pulled into the boat, she tells the rich man that she deserves the money because she lasted longer than anyone else.

When he refuses, she says, well, he should give her a portion of the money representing the distance she swam. He refuses again, citing the rules of the contest.

It was all or nothing. It doesn't matter to him if she dropped out 100 yards from the Honolulu Beach. In this case, missing by a little is the same as missing by a lot.

[12 : 33] The only way to win \$100 million is to swim all the way from San Diego to Honolulu. There is no partial payment. Right?

That's the illustration. And the same is true in the spiritual realm. If a person, let's just say, could be good enough to get within a couple of feet of heaven, we just think of it in those terms.

Good enough to get within a couple of feet of heaven, the door of heaven, that person would still go to hell. Because if you are outside the gates, you're not inside, and being inside is all that matters.

That's what Paul... That's how Paul is setting this up for us here. That it's all or nothing.

That if you're going to try perfection on your own. On your own merits.

[13 : 49] If you're going to seek to achieve that perfection by keeping God's laws, then you're not going to make it.

And yet God still demands perfection. He still demands absolute righteousness. And so the only other option you have is to find someone who will do it for you.

And that is Jesus, of course. Now, Paul is saying here that Israel has missed this. See, remember, primarily in chapters 9, 10, and 11, the focus is on Israel.

In chapter 9, the focus has really been more toward Israel as a nation, national Israel in the past, who had been given all this, all the inheritance, all of the rights, and yet they missed it because they rejected Christ.

And chapter 9 used that, or Paul used that, to teach us something about the sovereignty of God and salvation.

[15 : 11] Then it ends, if you will remember, chapter 9 ends with man's responsibility. And now, chapter 10 continues with that.

The responsibility of man. And the responsibility is faith. Faith. And so, Paul is going to speak to Israel, but through them he's speaking to all of us here today.

And we're to understand this very simple plan of salvation. Three things that we need to see. We need to see, first of all, the accessibility of salvation, or I might use the word, the proximity of it. Where it is in relation to us. This salvation that God offers. The proximity of it. And in that, the accessibility of it. Verse 4, look at it.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. That's how he begins this. That is, salvation is not the end of the law.

[16 : 24] Christ is the end of the law. It's Christ. Meaning, the goal of the law is perfection.

It's perfect righteousness. And only Jesus Christ met that. Meets that. Acquired that. So the goal of the law, the end of the law, is the righteousness of Christ.

It's only in Christ. And so Jesus Christ is the only one who obeyed the law perfectly. He did not sin. And those who believe in Him, trust Him, will receive His righteousness.

That's basically what verse 4 means. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Not their own righteousness.

Not a righteousness acquired by keeping the law. Being perfect in that sense. Because we're not able to do that. But the righteousness is only in Christ. He is the one who kept the law.

[17 : 31] And did not sin. Now, we're moving our way here to this idea of salvation being near to us. The proximity of it.

And so what Paul is saying to us here is very important. This righteousness is in Christ. Now, many, including the Jews, desired to earn their own righteousness.

To earn their salvation through obedience to the law. And when the Bible uses the word law, here it's talking about the whole of God's Word.

And so the Jews, and again, the Jews, the Israel, Israel, they're the primary recipients of what Paul has to say here. But through them, to all of us, they thought they could keep the law and be saved. And that will not work, will it? No. Because you can't do it. And how do we know that? Well, verse 5. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law.

[18:36] What's he writing about? He's writing about this whole issue of righteousness coming to us or we're gaining righteousness through the keeping of the law.

Moses wrote about it. What did he write? The man who does those things shall live by them. Now, this is a quote from Leviticus 18 and verse 5.

And its meaning really is very clear if you'll think about it. It's simply this. Those who trust in their obedience to the law are held accountable to every requirement of the law.

That is, you choose that route. If that's the way you think you're going to get salvation, if it's keeping the law and that's the way you're going to get it, then guess what? You've got to keep every one of them.

Every one of them. Every law. Paul said in Galatians 3.10, which is also a quote from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 27. I read it in the ESV.

[19:36] He said, For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, and here's where he's quoting Deuteronomy, Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

So, if that's your way, you think, Listen, I can earn my way to salvation. I can earn my way to heaven by keeping God's law.

Then you better not add to that keeping it the best I can. Because if that's the route you're going, you've got to keep it all. And that way is cursed.

Righteousness based on obedience to the law is one that demands absolute perfection. James also wrote in James 2.10, For whoever shall keep the law, the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, is guilty of all.

Guilty of all. So, salvation obtained through keeping of the law is impossible. Now, this is what he's saying to his Jewish brethren, the ones for whom his heart is broken, because they're not saved.

[20:57] And they're not saved because they believe that salvation and righteousness is through the keeping of the law. Now, most people in our day, Gentiles, don't put it in those terms.

They put it in these terms. That salvation is through good works. Same thing. Good works. The only good works that count with God are the works that are according to His Word.

And if you're going to get salvation that way, then you better not miss one of them. Not one. Or you're doomed. But really, it's worse than just misunderstanding or missing God's simple plan of salvation.

Really, this route is blasphemous. To think that you can be saved through the keeping of the law is blasphemous. Because it must, by its very nature, deny the value of the incarnation, Christ's coming, it must, by definition, be a denial of the value of His resurrection.

If you're going to be saved through the keeping of the law, then you don't need Jesus. Don't need for Him to come. Don't need for Him to die and be raised from the dead for you.

[22:20] And that's what He's talking about in verse 6. Look at it. But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way. That is, by the way, the righteousness that is according to faith, that comes by way of faith.

It speaks in this way. Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down from above.

Or, and don't say this also, who will descend into the abyss? That is, to bring Christ up from the dead. Now, what in the world does that mean? Well, it is a difficult passage.

Even for, you know, the great theologians. It's difficult to translate. But I really think this is what it means. I think He is highlighting the two greatest miracles of our salvation.

You know what they are? The incarnation. God becoming a man dwelling among us. Christ coming down from heaven.

[23:29] And the resurrection. The resurrection. Christ coming up from the dead. Those two things are highlighted here in verse 6 in a rather strange sort of way.

And so, when it comes to salvation, it is the miracle of God's grace. Not the works of the law. God has already done everything that needs to be done.

That's the point here. You do not have to reach heaven to bring Christ down. And you do not, because Christ has already come for you. And you do not have to create some living, real Christ of your own making, because Christ is already alive.

He was raised from the dead. And so, righteousness that is according to faith doesn't speak this way.

It speaks a different way. And how does it speak? Verse 8. But what does it say? What is this faith? Righteousness that comes according to faith. What does it say?

[24:34] The Word is near you. It's near you. In your mouth and in your heart. That is, the Word of faith. Don't get hung up on the Word of faith.

I hear a lot of that through some of the TV evangelists. But they're taking that out of context. It's just talking about the whole of the Gospel. The Word of faith. It's the whole message of the Gospel. Which we preach. And that's what Paul preached. And what I preach. Alright, so, the point is that God has done it all.

All that you need in order to be righteous before God, and therefore be saved, all that you need, God has already done. He's already done it.

Christ has come. So you don't have to bring Christ down. Christ died and was buried and was raised from the dead. So you don't have to bring Christ up from the depths, or from the grave, from death.

[25:36] It's already been done for you. The Word is near to you. This is good news. This is part of the good news. It's very near. It's not complicated.

It's not far out there somewhere. You don't have to figure something else out, because Christ is just too out there for me. He's very near.

The Word of faith, the Gospel, is near to you. He's saying. Do not have to reach heaven to bring it down. Do not have to reach into the depths of death to bring it up. It's near.

The Gospel is near. Salvation is near. Can you just think for a moment just how near the Gospel is? To people here in America especially?

Even though we have been seeing over the last several decades, America, their morality going down, and we're becoming really, and have become a post-Christian society of people now, and very immoral, godless, and yet still in America think about how near the Gospel is to everyone.

[26:54] Just think, for example, the abundance of Bibles in this country. Can you imagine? How many Bibles? You think about it. How many Bibles do you have at your house?

I don't know how many I have here in my office. But really, not just in regard to the Christian world, but just our culture itself.

You could hardly go anywhere where you could not find a Bible. God's Word is in an abundance here in this country, and it's free to get, free to give, free to buy.

any translation you'd like. And so many different study Bibles and, you know, Bibles like that, and it's almost become ridiculous.

We've got a study Bible that fits every conceivable life situation. I'm not against that.

[28:08] Don't misunderstand me. What I'm trying to point out is just think how near the Gospel is in this country. And not just with the abundance and the availability of Bibles, but think about the radio waves, the airways, Christian radio that is just 24-7 all the time.

You could take your radio and find half a dozen, maybe more, on AM and FM radio stations where the Gospel is being preached.

Now, there's some other junk also being preached over the airways, admittedly. But think of the availability and TV and the Internet now and billboards, and we, even in our city, our small city, see billboards from time to time around that give witness of the saving name of Jesus Christ.

It's near to us. And the churches, in most parts of our country, there are more churches than gas stations. Probably not more churches than banks, but gas stations, anyway.

Or maybe not banks, it would be drugstores, Walgreens. There are probably more of those on every corner than, anyway. But there are a lot of churches. I mean, just think how near the Gospel is.

[29:34] And yet, isn't it ironic that people try every other way but the way that is nearest to them?

One theologian put it this way, he said, the sheer perversity of unbelief is shown by the many who prefer to undertake an impossible odyssey rather than put their trust in an accessible Christ.

You think of the proliferation of all kinds of weird religions and cults. You know, Satan has in that sense, I say this in a guarded way, has in that sense an advantage over us. There's only one truth. Many, many ways to tell a lie. And isn't it something that people would rather believe a lie than to believe in the Jesus that is right here, right there, near to them.

The accessibility of salvation, the proximity of it, maybe be the better words, right here, very near. And then second, the simplicity of salvation.

[30:54] Not only near, accessible, but it's so simple. Verse 9, that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. It's an interesting verse, isn't it? This is one that many of you may have memorized.

It's part of the Roman road. It's a verse that is used quite often in other methods of soul winning, gospel presentations. It's a good verse, great verse.

And in the verse you have mouth and heart there in verse 9 in that order. Mouth followed by heart and it's just kind of following the order of the Deuteronomy passages quoted in verse 8.

And then you get to verse 10 and it's heart and mouth. I don't know why the reversal in the order doesn't really matter much. probably verse 10 is presenting it in the chronological order of redemption.

[32:08] Heart, mouth, a person believes, that's the heart, a person believes with the heart. The word believe is the same word that is translated faith in a number of places in the Bible.

Sometimes translated trust, pistou in the Greek. It means to be persuaded and to place your confidence in it. So a person believes with the heart.

That's where belief takes place. Belief does not take place in the mind, the intellect. Though the mind is engaged and the truth enters through the mind, but true faith, belief, is something that takes place in the heart.

And so a person believes in the heart. And then a person confesses. You have both these things, mouth and heart. Confession, heart.

And so a person confesses with the mouth. That makes sense, doesn't it? The word is homo, ligo, homo, ligo, ligo.

[33:17] And homo means saying. And the other word is from the word ligo, ligo, ligo, but ligo means to speak.

So it's speaking the same thing. That's what confess means and confession means. It means to speak the same thing. You speak it with the mouth. You're speaking the truth. Or you're confessing in this sense with the heart and mouth that the mouth is speaking what the heart believes to be true. And so when a person believes with the heart, righteousness is granted. Isn't that what it said? Yes. You believe with the heart.

Pisuo. You're persuaded. You place your confidence in a truth. And that truth is the truth of the gospel. And God grants righteousness.

Righteousness. When a person confesses with the mouth, salvation is granted. That's what the verse says.

[34:21] The text says. So, believe with the heart, righteousness is granted. Confess with the mouth, salvation is granted. Now, it may seem that we're talking about the same thing just in two different ways.

And in a sense, we are. But it's kind of the two sides of the same thing. And righteousness, salvation. And I think the best way to understand it is that righteousness is the positive side and salvation is the negative side of redemption.

Now, what do you mean by that? Negative. Is salvation a negative? I'm just speaking in the sense of the way it's used here. Righteousness is the positive side of redemption in that righteous, the righteousness of Christ is imputed, credited to us.

Something you gain. the righteousness of Christ. And so, righteousness pertains to what we become. Salvation, on the other hand, is the negative side in the sense that we are delivered from the wrath of God through redemption.

So, salvation pertains to what we escape. You see, the positive and negative side. Righteousness pertains to what we become as righteous as Christ because His righteousness has been imputed to us, credited to us.

[35 : 43] Salvation pertains to what we escape because we have been saved from the righteous and holy wrath of God because of our sin.

So, mouth and heart, heart and mouth, the two are mentioned here. Righteousness and salvation. With the heart, one believes unto righteousness.

With the mouth, one confesses unto salvation. But don't make too much of a separation. In fact, John Piper issues this important warning. He says, now be careful here.

The mouth is not at odds with the heart. And the heart is not left behind when the mouth speaks. Paul doesn't mean just believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, but you don't have to confess He's Lord with the mouth.

He doesn't mean that. And he does not mean you must confess Jesus is Lord, but you don't have to believe it in your heart. You know, he doesn't mean that. No, the point is the mouth confesses what the heart believes.

[36 : 50] And what the heart believes when it believes that God raised Jesus from the dead is that Jesus is Lord. He's Lord. And so that leads us to what it is we're to believe and confess.

Two things. We're to believe and confess that Jesus is Lord. The Lord Jesus. That's how it's translated here in the King James and New King James.

The Lord Jesus. But literally it should read I think more accurately reads Jesus is Lord.

Kurios. He is absolute supreme ruler. That's what you believe. And that's what you confess in order to be saved.

That Jesus Christ not just a good man who lived a couple thousand years ago not just a good preacher who did some wonderful things and went to the cross and died as an example of humility that we might follow.

[37 : 53] Now he's Lord. Kurios. Supreme ruler. And then the other thing you must believe is that God raised him from the dead. That's why this particular passage is so good when sharing the gospel.

God raised him from the dead. Someone has put it this way to believe that God raised Christ from the dead is to identify ourselves with the one who purchased our redemption on the cross and rose to share his eternal life with us for whom he is Lord and Savior.

Those who for whom he is Lord and Savior. They go together. And so really to deny the resurrection is to deny everything about Christ.

See, you know, I have often thought, you know, because I've used this verse so many times over the years, I've often thought I wish that it said believe that Jesus died and was raised from the dead. But it doesn't say that.

It says believe that God raised him from the dead. Well, he had to have died in order to be raised.

So, you know, if you're going to deny the resurrection, you're denying it all. And really, you're denying the redemptive work of every member of the Godhead.

[39 : 19] You are denying the God who provided salvation. You're denying the Son who accomplished it through his death and resurrection. And you're denying the Holy Spirit who revealed it to you.

So, you must believe these two things. You must confess these two things or you're not saved.

That's what he's saying. All right, so the accessibility of salvation, the simplicity.

How could it be simpler? And really, there's more to be said about the simplicity of it. But let me give you the third point very quickly. The availability of salvation. It's available.

That's also part of the faith outline, isn't it? A is for available. Remember, F-A-I-T-H. The availability of it in verse 11 speaks to that.

For the Scripture says, whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. You're not going to be disappointed.

[40 : 22] You're not going to be let down. You're not going to ever come to the place where you regret believing in Him.

because it didn't turn out. That God didn't fulfill His promise. You're never going to be put to shame. Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame for...

There's no distinction between Jew and Greek. Greek is just another word for Gentile here in its meaning. So, He's talking about everyone. Because you're either a Jew or a Gentile.

There's no distinction between Jew or Gentile. Gentile or Greek. For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

This is a tremendous promise. Salvation is available because God is the Lord over all and He's rich to all who call upon Him.

[41:29] And there's never been a person ever who called upon the Lord and was not saved. Now, doesn't that give us tremendous encouragement in our sharing of the gospel?

There's never been a person to call upon the name of the Lord and not be saved. Jesus, whoever comes unto me, I will not in no wise will I cast them out. That's even better or maybe even more simpler for, and then this is a quote from the Old Testament, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Not hope to be one day, but shall be saved. God is so simple. One of my favorite Bible commentators, John Phillips, and if you are looking for a good commentary for Bible study, I recommend John Phillips.

And this is what he said about this verse, this last part of the verse. He said, where within the compass of one short verse can be found a better statement of, number one, the scope of the gospel, whoever.

Number two, the simplicity of the gospel calls upon the name of the Lord. It's as simple as that. And the substance of the gospel shall be saved.

[43:17] where could you find, even in scripture, a more concise statement of the simplicity of the gospel, and with its simplicity a wonderful promise.

Availability of the gospel. Anyone can call.

Thank you.