

**Good morning Grace Communion Charlotte. Today, the title of the sermon is “Salvation Awaits Us All” taken from the book of Romans 10:5-15.** But what does salvation mean – in Christianity, it means deliverance, redemption, it is the saving of human beings from death and separation from God by Christ death and resurrection.

Last week, the Apostle Paul was addressing his empathy for the Jews who maintained an unwillingness to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Paul finds it difficult and understands their stubbornness. These Jews were like many of us today, but as we grow in faith we learn to **“Surrender All as Christ permits us to be filled with the Holy Spirit.”** But Paul is relentless and his heart’s desire for their salvation is paramount. Paul knows their appetite for religion is strong, but their zest for faith righteousness is ill-informed about God. They could not accept that God had a righteousness above the righteousness of the law. It was incredulous to them that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law...that Jesus Christ is the real righteousness and provides this righteousness to all believers. **So, what does the Apostle do in today’s message? He compares the law against the Gospel.**

If you have your scriptures, let's turn to Romans 10:5-15 and listen to the Apostle Paul re-address and confirm the righteousness of Christ. He recites Leviticus 18:5, where...

*<sup>5</sup> Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them."*

The Lord did not want the Israelites to live like the Egyptians nor the Canaanites. He wanted them to obey His commandments and decrees. To live by the law means that the law must be perfectly obeyed. This was impossible because man could not obey it. Why, because the law knew no mercy and it never overlooked the smallest deficiency. One guilty thought or desire would condemn you. Whoever lived by the law must keep the entire law and not have any transgressions. The law could never be a means of faith righteousness.

Listen, let's put this in perspective. How many rules did your parents establish for you as a kid? Can you recall your parents giving you a curfew to be home by 9pm when your date showed up at 8? If you grew

up in the era like my mother, she had to chaperone her older sister and once they left the house, they dropped her off. And if you stayed out, no matter how long, you were going to church. **How many rules did you break?** The heart was willing, but the flesh is weak.

Many of us would have broken these rules. Therefore, we understand how the Israelites would have fallen short, being disobedient. Those rules established by our parents pointed us to something much bigger than us. But having faith in Christ, those rules become easier to live because we desire to please Him. Jesus makes this possible, not the righteousness of the law...the law pointed to self-righteousness. Now, **the Apostle Paul is contrasting the law of righteousness in verse 5 with faith righteousness in verse 6. Listen to the Apostle Paul...he states...**

*<sup>6</sup> But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).*

Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 30:11-14 where Moses exhorts the Israelites to obey God's commandments – those commandments were not beyond their reach. **But the Israelites had a presumptuous attitude that they had achieved personal excellence.** This was an allusion and it reinforced the Apostle Paul to emphasize that righteousness of faith exceeded righteousness of the law. Faith righteousness is a gift from God rather than something earned. Paul speaks of Christ rather than the commandments and he omits **obey** in verse 14 because life is about acceptance. We accept Christ in our hearts and join Him in what He has already accomplished. In Christ, we have GRACE, the results of the law were disgrace.

*The question of 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead) **reflects on Matt 27:42**, where the chief priests and teachers of the law mocked Christ and said *Let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him.* They were taunting questions because of their disbelief and refusal to believe in the incarnation of Jesus*

Christ. The chief priests and teachers were actually saying, if Jesus is the Messiah, bring him down from heaven, or up from the grave, and let him put a stop to this Roman oppression.

Listen, we are not justified by our works but by faith which we are counted righteous and brought into a right relationship with God by way of Jesus Christ. **It is through Jesus' life, death and resurrection that gives us salvation for a lost world and that Salvation Awaits Us All.**

What Jesus wants is for us to accept Him not just obey Him. Paul applied this principle that salvation is offered through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that the word of God in the gospel is easy to obtain.

*<sup>8</sup> But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning **faith** that we proclaim:*

Again, the Apostle Paul is quoting Deut 30:14 that states the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. Paul is applying the principle to the gospel, not the law. He says instead, "...that is, the word of faith that we preach." The message about righteousness through faith is near

you — it is within you. Christ is available to faith and so is the Gospel.

**So,**

*<sup>9</sup> If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Paul is showing us the accessible of true righteousness...He’s not telling us that salvation requires spoken words, but rather how the words *mouth* and *heart* apply to the gospel. It is Christ (not the law) that should be in the heart and mind. **Listen, those rules given to us by our parents pointed us to obedience, but in Christ, we live them by faith.**

We embrace the Great Commandments in our hearts because they are in us. Our outward confession of righteousness is based on the inward act of faith. We are confessing that Jesus is Lord. Believing is our hearts that Jesus was Resurrected.

*But wait, let’s read verse 9 again, the Apostle Paul said, “If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Listen, it sounds odd that the Apostle Paul would tell us to confess and then believe with our hearts. To understand his reasoning, we have to acknowledge Roman culture. Rome considered Caesar to be Lord, and citizens were required to say “Caesar is Lord.” To proclaim Jesus as Lord incited treason which was a death penalty. And yet, many Christians died for confessing that Jesus is Lord. Rather than bowing down to the enemy, they continued their proclamation and the church prospered, being nurtured by the blood of the saints.

This same behavior must continue by the saints today. If we are going to improve race relationships, equality for education, medical care, and criminal justice, we must stand up and confess the issues that oppress us. Sitting down is not an option. We must believe and act on the saving power of Christ.

Luke tells us in Acts 2:21, *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* **This verse is not solely based on heaven but the calamities we experience on earth.** Jesus wants us to call on Him now. However, in Matt 7:21, *Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord; will*

*enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* Our faith must produce works. **If we confess with our hearts, there should be deeds associated with our faith.**

There are people today who worship Jesus with their lips only on Sunday morning. And some confess Jesus as Lord during baptism, but this is the end of it. Sometimes we fall short of confessing because we are sensitive about stepping on someone's toes. **We give lip service, but know this...**

*<sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified (**made righteous**), and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. <sup>11</sup> As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."*

Paul parallels the idea of faith and confession and notes that righteousness and salvation are equivalent. Listen, the law required obedience, **but the gospel requires acceptance.** "Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame" meaning that people who have their faith in Jesus Christ will not be found short on the day of judgment.

As I was writing this sermon, I asked who was the Apostle Paul writing to? He was writing to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. However, a few years before this letter was written, the Roman emperor had banished the Jews out of Rome in a political move to consolidate power. In their absence, the Christian community expanded multiculturally with people from all over the world. By the time the Jews returned to Rome, the church was advancing without the Jews. There was considerable anguish amongst the Jews and Gentiles but for the first time they found themselves part of a new faith community. Sharing meals, sharing beliefs, and calling themselves a family. However, this came with great pain associated with becoming a Christian. **This prompted the Apostle Paul to cite...**

*<sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

The Apostle Paul is quoting Joel 2:32, and informing us that salvation only comes by calling on the name of the Lord. **However, in Joel, the Lord was Yahweh, but Paul uses the verse for Christ, showing that**

**he accepted Jesus as God.** In this message, God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham that his descendants would multiply as the stars in heaven. We are seeing that the Jewish story is complete, and the universal family of Christ is joining as one because there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. **Everyone is invited to faith in Christ.** There is one God for all the world. **Paul knew the law and the Gospel and appealed that...**

*<sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

We all know that Salvation comes by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord.

The problem is that Paul's own people are rejecting the message because they believe Jesus is a crucified criminal rather than the Messiah and because of this...they failed to call on His name. Therefore, salvation comes in response to the preaching, but the problem cannot be solved by sending more preachers. The problem is resolved when the messenger

timely arrives to proclaim the Good News and the receiver is ready to accept Jesus Christ.

Between verse 14-15, there are four questions that explain why preaching the Gospel is necessary.

- The first requirement is that they believe (v. 14).
- But they cannot believe in the Lord unless they hear about him (v. 14).
- And they cannot hear about the Lord unless someone proclaims him (v. 14).
- And no proclamation can be made unless the proclaimer is sent (v. 15).

Paul talks about hearing the Word and not reading the Word because most people of that day were illiterate with limited reading material. If they knew about Christ, someone would have to tell them. Even in America, most people are literate, but most people come to Christ because someone told them. When the messengers told the Jews they would be released from the Babylonian Empire, it was good news to the Jews, that's why the messenger's feet was considered beautiful. **So, let's tell the world: your neighbor, your friends and your enemies that salvation awaits us all.**

In conclusion, the Apostle Paul connects the Hebrew story with the Gospel. Paul lays out the Hebrew story by blending the Old and New Testament. As Christians, we have an obligation to live in righteousness because of what Christ did on the Cross. Accept His gift of salvation and tell others about it. As we reflect on Salvation, let's not forget the thieves on the Cross for they are a fitting picture of all mankind. We can either receive Christ's gift of salvation or reject it. If we receive it, we are no longer a thief in the eyes of God because our sins are eradicated, and we can enter into the kingdom of heaven. For those who listen to this sermon tomorrow or thereafter, I ask you to surrender and give your life to Christ as Salvation Awaits Us All.

**Let's pray...**

**Communion...**