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Enjoying God Ministries

Romans #43

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The Riches of God are for All who Believe

Romans 10:5-13

I'm sure you have come to expect a special message on the Sunday before Christmas, and this year will be no exception. But that doesn't mean we won't be in Romans. After considerable thought and prayer, I honestly couldn't think of a passage of Scripture more suited to Christmas than Romans 10:5-13. Think about it. Christmas is the glorious good news that God has sent his Son to save his people. This is what the angel said to Joseph when he discovered that Mary was pregnant:

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:20-21).

Christmas isn't primarily about a virgin birth or shepherds or wise men or people giving gifts to one another. Christmas is primarily about the gift of God the Son from God the Father by means of God the Holy Spirit so that we might be saved! As Paul says here in our passage, Christmas is all about God “bestowing his riches on all who call on him” (Rom. 10:12). So, our message today at Bridgeway is one that we proclaim on every day: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

The Counterintuitive Impact of Romans (vv. 5-8)

I hope by now that you have come to realize how counter-intuitive the entire book of Romans is. Here is what I mean by that. Perhaps the most basic and intuitive instinct of the human soul is that of self-justification. We are by nature people who are self-defensive and determined to make it on our own. To be told repeatedly, as we are in Romans, that we are fallen, broken, self-absorbed idolaters and rebels against

the King of the universe runs directly counter to what our native instincts tell us. We fancy ourselves to be just fine. We bristle when told that we are deserving of nothing from God but eternal damnation. Our pride rises up in angry defiance when told that in order to enjoy eternal life we must renounce all self-reliance and look not to our own righteousness but to that of another, Jesus Christ.

This is what Romans has been saying all along and will continue to say right up to the end. That is why Romans is, simultaneously, perhaps the most loved and most despised of all NT books.

We see our most basic instinct reflected here in vv. 5-7. We are all predisposed to justify ourselves based on our efforts, our good deeds, our obedience to whatever moral code we have embraced. But there is a profound and inescapable problem. Paul appeals to Moses to make this point. If you want to “live” or be justified in the sight of God based on the law, then you must obey it perfectly. Is there any individual who, as Paul says in v. 5, “does the commandments”? Is there anyone who is perfect and without fail obeys every jot and tittle of the law? No (see Gal. 5:3). What, then, is the solution?

The solution is given in vv. 6-7. When you seek after righteousness in the way that God has ordained, you do it by faith. You don’t say in your heart that I will strive by my good deeds to ascend into heaven in order to bring Jesus down, nor will I resolve to descend into the abyss in order to raise Christ from the dead. Salvation is not a matter of searching high and low, or of working to gain God’s approval. God has already done all that is necessary.

He has brought salvation to us when Christ came to earth as a man. This is the good news of Christmas. You don’t have to scale the heights of heaven to secure God’s favor. Christ has already come down to us with it. You don’t have to descend into the depths of the earth to somehow bring it up. Christ has already been raised from the dead. This is simply Paul’s way of saying, once again, as he has repeatedly in Romans, that salvation is not a matter of performing some magnificent spiritual, religious, or physical deed. By God’s grace and mercy, it is already here, present and available.

Listen again to the words in v. 8. You don’t have to jump up and down to get God’s attention. You don’t have to run off to yet another conference to hear the one message that will guarantee you a place in heaven. You don’t have to buy into the latest theological novelty. The “word” that brings life is near you. It’s here right now. All you need to do is believe. I love the way John Stott puts it:

“Storming the ramparts of heaven and potholing in Hades, in search of Christ, are equally unnecessary. For Christ has come and died, and been raised, and is therefore immediately accessible to faith. We do not need to do anything. Everything that is necessary has already been done” (284).

Ok. But believe what? Paul answers that in vv. 9-13.

Believe in Jesus as Lord, who was Raised from the Dead (vv. 9-10)

So, what then are the conditions on which salvation hangs suspended? If it isn't a result of our obedience, whom does God save? Paul's answer is clear and unmistakable: salvation comes to anyone who confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes in their heart that God raised him from the dead (v. 9).

What does it mean to "confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord"? Not "a" lord or any so-called "lord" but Lord of heaven and earth. To answer this, we must first decide what Paul means by referring to Jesus as "Lord."

The Greek word *kurios*, ("Lord") is used more than 6,000x in the LXX to translate the name YHWH. Many of these OT texts referring to YHWH are applied to Jesus in the NT. For example, its use in Joel 2:32 is applied to Jesus in Romans 10:13. Thus, confession of the "Lordship" of Jesus entails, at minimum, the confession of his full and perfect deity. Jesus is YHWH incarnate. In Philippians 2:10 Paul describes the title *Kurios* as "the name which is above every name," which can only be the name of God himself. Thus, as Cranfield notes, "the confession that Jesus is Lord meant the acknowledgment that Jesus shares the name and the nature, the holiness, the authority, power, majesty and eternity of the one and only true God" (2:529; see 1 Cor. 8:5-6).

Can a person be a Christian and not confess that Jesus is Lord? No. That doesn't mean a person has to fully understand all the implications of acknowledging that Jesus is God in human flesh. Providing a theologically sophisticated definition of the Incarnation isn't what Paul means here. But for a person to willingly and knowingly deny that Jesus is God puts a person's soul in jeopardy of eternal condemnation.

Think about it this way. When a person claims to have put their trust and faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, it's crucial that they understand who this Jesus is! They need to understand that a mere human can't save them. A mere human can't serve as a sacrifice for their sin on the cross. Although a person's initial faith in Jesus is unformed and minimal, if it is true saving faith the Holy Spirit will gradually awaken them to the realization that only a man who is also God can save them.

But there is more in the confession of Jesus as Lord than simply acknowledging that he is God. This confession involves the acknowledgment of the rightful authority of Jesus Christ over the life of the believer. The believer has entered into a new relationship with Jesus in which he/she happily acknowledges that Jesus, because he is Lord, has absolute sovereignty and mastery of over his/her life.

It's also important that we recognize a distinction between the implicit acknowledgment by the new convert of the *principle* of Christ's rightful authority over his life and the explicit *practice* of progressive submission to the Christ who is Lord. ***Receiving Christ as Savior and Lord does not mean the new convert is wholly committed. It does mean he is committed to being holy.***

Is Jesus truly Lord of your life if you walk in constant, unrepentant disobedience to him? No. Saving faith is a working faith. That faith by means of which we are justified is the *kind or quality* of faith that produces obedience and the fruit of the Spirit. In the absence of obedience, in the absence of fruit, in the absence of submission to the Lordship of Jesus, there is doubt whether the faith is *saving*.

Let's never forget that mere confession is of no value apart from the commitment of the heart to cherish and trust and follow Jesus. Jesus himself made this clear:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (Matt. 7:21-23).

And what does it mean for a person to “do” the will of the Father? Jesus answered that clearly in John 6:40 when he said, “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40).

But if it is true that confession without commitment is of no value, it is also true that commitment without confession is spurious. We look again to the words of Jesus for this, where he said,

“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).

I once read about a man named C. K. Lee, a Chinese Christian, who told of his experience in speaking at a theologically liberal church. He was asked by a person: “Why should we send Christianity to China when the Chinese already have Confucianism?” He answered: “There are three reasons. (1) Confucius was only a teacher, but Jesus is a Savior. (2) Confucius is dead, but Jesus is alive. (3) Confucius himself will one day stand before Jesus to be judged by him, even as will all Chinese people and Americans unless they first kneel before him and from the heart confess that he is Lord of all.”

So, let's be very clear about this. The sort of “confession” that Paul has in mind is not merely speaking the words, “Jesus is Lord” with your mouth. Even Satan knows that Jesus is Lord. Hypocrites and liars can utter the words “Jesus is Lord.” Paul is talking about a confession that comes from a heart that has been born again, a heart that embraces and trusts and loves and adores the Lordship of Jesus. Don't ever think that merely by sharing your testimony in public and saying, “Jesus is Lord” will by itself save you.

Merely signing a decision card or raising a hand is not saving. This is a confession of the mouth that expresses the deeply held conviction of the heart.

This leads us the second condition laid out by Paul: you must “believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.” Why? What’s the big deal about whether or not the tomb of Jesus is empty? Isn’t it enough that he lived a godly life and left us with a storehouse of wisdom and moral guidance? Why do people muck it up by insisting that Jesus literally and physically came back to life?

The answer is quite simple. If Jesus is still dead in the grave, his death accomplished nothing of saving value. He may have provided an example of how to suffer unjustly, but that can’t save anyone. Deliverance from divine wrath cannot be obtained simply by dying, if the one who has died is still dead. The bodily resurrection of Jesus was God the Father’s confirmation and seal on the truth of what the death of Jesus accomplished.

“The resurrection is God’s vindication of everything Jesus accomplished in his life and death. And what he accomplished was a triumph over all our guilt, our condemnation, our death, Satan, and hell. And now as the risen victor over all his enemies he is given a name that is above every name: Lord” (John Piper).

Verse 10 reaffirms in only slightly different terms what verse 9 has just stated. To be “justified” and to be “saved” are simply two sides of the same spiritual coin. We’ve seen justification all through Romans. By now you should be accustomed to hearing me define it as God’s legal declaration that the one who believes in Jesus is righteous and acceptable in his sight. Justification happens only once in the life of the believer. It is a singular act of God in which he imputes or reckons to the believer the very righteousness of Jesus himself. This comes to the one who believes.

We have all heard the word “saved” countless times, but I wonder if it has become so routine in our vocabulary that we’ve lost sight of how glorious it is. Many fail to reckon with the beauty and majesty of this word because they don’t feel themselves to be in any imminent danger. To be “saved” suggests rather forthrightly that our souls are in eternal peril. There is something from which we need to be delivered. And that something is the righteous and holy demands of an infinitely just God. Those demands are manifested in wrath and anger and judgment. And it is precisely from that otherwise well-deserved wrath that we are “saved” when we confess that Jesus is the living, risen Lord who has endured and exhausted in himself the judgment that we should have experienced.

Three Glorious Blessings of Salvation (vv. 11-12)

As glorious as it is that we are “saved” from divine wrath, it is more glorious still to consider what we are “saved” for or to. In other words, what blessings or privileges or gifts do we receive when we believe and are justified, when we confess and are saved? Paul mentions three in particular.

First, we have the absolute, unassailable, rock-solid, blood-bought assurance that we will never “be put to shame” (v. 11). All of us know what it feels like to experience shame. It’s horrible. It is soul crushing and

dignity destroying. It leaves us feeling lost and hopeless and disqualified. But here in Romans 10:11 I think Paul has two ideas primarily in mind.

In the first place, there is the fear of being exposed as stupid for believing in something that turns out in the end to be a fraud. To put all your eggs in one basket, spiritually speaking, only to discover that the basket is utterly empty is shattering. Paul's point here is that we need never worry or live in fear that the promises of God to believers will fail to come to pass. We have it guaranteed to us, based first on the integrity of God's character and second on the blood of Christ shed for us.

But there is a second dimension to what Paul has in mind. It is the fear that everyone experiences of being exposed as ugly and defiled and unworthy and spiritually deformed. To feel shame at being seen and known as having failed is terrifying. But listen to how Jude put it –

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever, Amen” (Jude 24-25).

What I want you to see and hear is that when we stand before the blinding, scintillating glory of God himself we won't be afraid or ashamed but will feel only “great joy”! That is the assurance that Paul gives us in Romans 10:11.

Second, yet another blessing of being justified and saved is that regardless of race or culture or heritage we all have the same Lord as Lord. God no longer looks on any human, ethnic, physical, or racial distinctives. He sees us all in the same light, as those clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus is Lord over believing Jews and believing Gentiles and believing Russians and believing Australians and believing blacks and believing whites and believers of every color and country and political party. The only thing that matters is whether or not we believe!

Third, and this may be the most glorious blessing of all, God bestows on all who believe “his riches” (v. 12b). Some of you unfamiliar to the Christian faith may think that Paul has just assured all believers that they will be financially wealthy in this life. No. That is not what he means by the word “riches.” It is assuredly true that in many cases he blesses people with great earthly treasures. And he does so in order that they might more generously share with those who have little.

But it is not cars or computers or bulging checkbooks or ever-increasing stock portfolios or land or lake homes or jet airplanes that are promised to us.

Paul has been explaining the “riches” of salvation all through Romans. He has in mind things such as the forgiveness of sins . . . redemption . . . being foreknown and foreloved by God . . . being predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus . . . being called and justified and ultimately being glorified and made like unto Jesus himself. The “riches” in view are justification and sanctification and the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit and being adopted as the children of God who cry out, Abba! Father!

The “riches” of salvation include the promise of never being put to shame or suffering disappointment that something God has promised fails to come to pass. You, this local church, and the love and unity that we share together in Christ are the “riches” of salvation. The gifts of the Holy Spirit that enable us to serve and minister to one another are the “riches” of salvation.

Paul will later, in chapter 14, speak of the “riches” of the kingdom of God that consists in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The “riches” include the “promises” given to the patriarchs (Rom. 15:8) and hope in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 15:13) and the assurance that our lowly corrupt bodies will be resurrected and glorified.

But all these are not the greatest of the treasures and wealth that God gives to those who believe. The most precious of all “riches” is God himself! ***We get God!*** We get to see God, to bask in the presence of his beauty. We will be forever satisfied and delighted with the splendor of God in all his beauty.

Back in Romans 9:23 Paul spoke of the “riches of his glory” prepared for the “vessels of mercy” whom God has chosen to inherit eternal life. The greatest of the “riches” that are so freely given to us is God’s very glory: ours to see and enjoy and savor and be enthralled and fascinated.

I confess that I often grow weary of people and their speculations about what heaven will be like. They have fanciful and often selfish illusions about life in the new heaven and new earth. And in doing so they lose sight of the greatest joy and blessing of all. John barely touched on it in Revelation 22, but what he said is enough:

“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:3-5).

Do you now see how this wonderful passage is all about Christmas? Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Christmas is all about the salvation and riches of God that have come to those who have put their faith in the babe in the manger, the babe who grew up into manhood and never committed sin, the man who was scourged and crucified and rose again from the dead.

The Glorious Good News of Christmas (v. 13)

And the good news of Christmas is nowhere better summed up than in the words of Paul in Romans 10:13 – “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Everyone. No exceptions. Any and all who call will be saved. Any and all who believe will be justified.

This time of year often brings into the church people who do not know Jesus as Lord. If that is you, we are glad you are here. I have one message for you, one thought for you to ponder, one challenge that I pray you will embrace. Call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Appeal to him for forgiveness. Cry out to him for mercy. No one who does will be denied. No one who does will be turned away or left hopeless. All who call, regardless of race or economic status or educational attainment or athletic prowess, all who call will be saved!