

“Call on the Name of the Lord”

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Series: *Romans*

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If you have a Bible, you can be making your way to Romans chapter 9 verse 30 through chapter 10 verse 13 today. Preacher hasn't preached in two weeks so this sermon will be four hours. So just prepare yourselves. That's where we're going. This semester we are in the second half of Paul's letter to the church in Rome and before the weather we were looking at Romans 9, and if you were here for that you know we were in the sort of the deep end of the theological pool and Paul waded into the doctrines that give us so many mental hiccups, God's sovereignty, election, predestination, right? We talked about all those things, and Paul brought those things up to answer this question. Remember he was Jewish. Why are not my ethnically or ethnically and nationally Jewish brothers and sisters, why are they not believing the gospel that I preach? That's what he wanted to know. Why? Why is it working this way? And in chapter 9 his answer was ultimately it's up to God. He is sovereign. Whoever becomes a Christian, whoever believes it's ultimately up to him and having established that now it's almost like he moves from the realm of the divine perspective to the realm of the human perspective. So, this is not a separate message that's different from chapter 9, rather it's a having looked at the sovereignty of God, now let's talk about from the human perspective. Why don't they believe? In matter of fact why doesn't anyone believe? What does it even mean to believe? So, these questions and more. Let's read Romans 9-chapter 9 verse 30 through chapter 10 verse 13. This is God's word.

30 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.

32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

33 as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

6 But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

7 "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

9 because, 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.

10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Would you pray with me?

Help us our Father, help us, give us insight, give us wisdom, give us the illumination of the Holy Spirit so that what we're reading here becomes understood with our brains but that it would make its way into our hearts that that we would be people who call on you Lord Jesus and that in calling on you we would see all that you give us graciously by faith. So help us we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

We've already referenced the weather, but I can't miss an opportunity to grumble and complain publicly about the weather. I was, this was two weeks ago before the ice storm and you know you can't just watch the network news now and watch the weatherman. Now the internet has weathermen, and YouTube has weathermen and they are wanting so much to make us so afraid, and I listened to them. So I heard their words about historic, worst ever, catastrophic, major, devastating, and it just gets worse and I believed them and begin working through my plan for how we would take care of our family if you know terrible things should happen and a caveat is that I'm really not, don't know that I've ever planned before for weather. Not good at this. I'm whatever a prepper is I'm the anti-prepper. Whoever's going to get caught off guard it's going to start with me, and we'll be the first to die, right? That's just kind of how I think about it but I thought okay we have a backup generator but it might give us a couple of days you know with keeping the refrigerators going and at that point if we can't heat our home we're gonna have to leave so where will we go, and at that point things just went really dark for a while and I started thinking about it's probably, we should probably move cities. We probably, why are we even here? We have ice storms and hurricanes? Who would live in this kind of place anyway? More than you wanted to know.

There came a point where I realized I'm gonna have to call on somebody for help, and I started running through the list of who I could call, and there was a certain subset of people who I thought if I call them, they're gonna be in the exact same position that I'm in. They're gonna be no help at all. They can't help us. There's no advantage and then I thought but this person they would be able to heat their house. This person, they're not gonna run out of food and I kind of had that list. It only makes sense to call on somebody if they can actually help you.

That's true when it comes to ice storms. That's true in every aspect of our lives. It's true when we're talking about eternity as well. In fact, that's the point that Paul's making is that we have this need that's greater than food and heat.

We need to be saved from the wrath of God Almighty because of our sin and we need to be righteous. And there's only one way to get that.

In this passage he tells us, call on the name of Jesus and you will be saved. That's the point. So, let's talk about that. If you call on him, what do you get? And then how do you even call on him in the first place? That's the two questions we're gonna we're gonna try to answer here.

If you call on him, what do you get?

In other words, how can he help you? First point. At the end of the discussion of God's sovereignty in chapter 9 Paul began to talk about Gentiles becoming people of God and yes there's some ethnic national Jewish folks that are gonna believe to but it'll be a remnant, which brings up again the question of Gentiles versus Jewish people, which sounds just so utterly foreign to us in the 21st century in the West. We're like, why is this a question? But for Paul in the first century as a Jewish person who knew his Old Testament, this is the question. It just, he's got to make sense out of this. And so look at how he phrases it in verses 30 and 31. Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness attained it by faith, but Israel whose entire law and life was about the pursuit of righteousness failed to attain it.

What is this righteousness that he's talking about?

If you've been with us throughout this series in Romans, he talks about righteousness all over this this book and to put it simply it's a salvation word. To attain righteousness means that you're rescued from sins, penalty, and power and ultimately, its presence. To be righteous means you have now a standing with God. The word we use for that is you're justified. You've had a righteousness, a record, a moral record credited to your account whereas our moral record was terrible. We now get the moral record of Jesus. It has everything included with it of eternal blessing in heaven and new heavens, new earth. There's a moral quality. If you have been declared righteous you in this life begin to become righteous. But at a basic level let's put it this way.

If you want to go to heaven when you die, if you want to be able to stand before God under his blessing and not his condemnation, you must be righteous.

You must be. If you're not righteous you will be condemned by God, and there is a place called hell that is eternal separation from his love and kindness and eternal presence of his wrath and justice. So, righteousness is a big deal, biblically speaking. We have to have it. It's the thing that we are most desperate for.

But we can't get it the way that we think we can. Look at the difference between how Israel and how the Gentiles pursue and receive or don't receive righteousness. Look at verse 32. Why did Israel not succeed in getting this principle called righteousness? They pursued it as if it were based on their morality, as if it were based on their rigorous adherence to the ceremonial and civil and moral aspects of the law of Moses. They didn't pursue it by faith.

When you think about Gentiles, they had no affiliation with the law of Moses, meaning they weren't trying to morally behave their way into some sort of standing with God. But they did hear the gospel and believed it, and they get it. Paul's brought up righteousness before and how to get it in chapters 3 through 5. And if you recall, he said then it was something that it ultimately has to come from God. We have all of these ways that we pursue righteousness, and we try to attain it and get it for ourselves. But the only way that you can really have it is if you receive it as a gift. He has to give it to you. And he's back to that distinction here. Gentiles received it by faith and many who pursued it refused to receive the gift but tried to get it by achievement.

So, the problem with Israel here is that they're not believing, they're not receiving the righteousness from God. They lack faith and that's why they're working. So, they lack faith, faith in what? He kind of gets us to the core of the issue. Look at verses 32 and 33. He says the problem is that there are working for their righteousness and *they've stumbled over the stumbling stone*. And then he quotes Isaiah 28 which is plastered all over the pages of the New Testament. It's in multiple places where this prophecy says that God himself would lay a stone that would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. But if you believe in him, whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. If you refuse to believe in him, you will trip over him and land on your face. It's almost the image, a picture of a race. You've got these people that are running and Israel in the middle of their running and their effort and their pursuit, hit the stumbling stone and land on their faces and don't get the thing that they were after in the first place. They miss it and they're put to shame, exposed, no standing before God. The stone here is obviously Jesus. He says here, him in the passage, but they don't receive the Christ. They don't receive their Messiah. Rather, they try to work for righteousness.

So, it really comes down to Jesus as it always does, right? 10 verses 1 through 4. Paul reiterates his love for his Jewish brothers and sisters. He longs for them to believe. He prays for it. Keep in mind this is after Romans 9 where he says salvation is up to God. He has no idea who of his Jewish brothers and sisters is going to believe, and so he prays for them anyway. And he says their zeal is great, verse 2, *but they don't have any knowledge*.

Sincerity of belief without the right object of belief is useless. Sincerity for sincerity's sake is absolute rot.

Sincerity of belief in what? That's the question. Most people in our world would say it just the opposite. It doesn't matter who you believe in or what you believe as long as you believe it sincerely. And then the scriptures would just say nope, doesn't work that way. Zeal without knowledge is just zeal that ends in condemnation anyway. They're ignorant of the true righteousness that comes from God, so they don't submit to the one that comes from God. They won't submit to Christ who achieved it and accomplished it. They're like the people in the parable. Their hearts say, we don't want this guy to rule over us. We see this Messiah character and we don't want him. We reject him. They're with the crowds who are crying out, crucify him, and Pilate says, do you want me to crucify your king? And they say, we have no king but Caesar. But that's a heart disposition of unbelief and rebellion and an absolute refusal to see what is plain as the noses on everybody's faces. Unbelief. In the end, verse four, *Christ is the end of the law to everyone who believes*. Those who want to seek righteousness by works; he's the end of all that. And in fact, he's the end of it because he actually is the one who fulfilled all the requirements of the law for us. We don't have to perform because he did perform perfectly already. When it comes to a righteousness and a standing before God, it's his performance, not ours.

What do you get if you call on Jesus by faith? Righteousness. The very thing that we have to have lest we stand condemned.

I would assume in a church like ours, very few would say, yeah, I honestly think that I can just work really hard and perform better and somehow get God to accept me and be happy with me. We have better Bible knowledge than that, probably for the most part. We know that it doesn't work that way. Especially if you grew up in a Christ honoring Bible believing church, you know that that's not how it operates. And yet in function, we still kind of live this way sometimes. We base both our self-worth and our standing with God and those two things are inextricably tied together. How you think of yourself and what you're standing with God is or at least how you think of it. Those two things are intimately tied together, and we find ourselves, even surprising ourselves, basing those things on what we've done, how we're doing, what's my obedience been like this week. Our performance. And we fail to bring into our minds or our hearts Christ's performance for us and let that actually take root and bear fruit. This is true in the passage and in our lived experience.

You'll know you're living by your works if you really don't see the point of Jesus. And there are a lot of people who fall into that category. That there might be religious and though it might be church people, I've known some in my life who they profess faith in Christ, but when it comes to their actual spiritual life, they really, they talk about God generic, but they really don't understand what do we have, why is Jesus around? I guess he's a, I guess he's a good teacher for us. We should live by his laws. He's a good example for us. We should do as he did, but there's not much of a heart level concept of he was crucified in my place and raised from the dead, and he is my righteousness and my standing before God. And without him, I have nothing.

When you start talking like that, folks who have not made much of Jesus will start to say things like, now you're starting to sound a little radical. Now you're starting to, you just get a little too religious in the South. Sometimes Jesus becomes, it's, he's just the get out of hell ticket. And once you have the ticket, you don't really need to think of him again. When we do that, we have chopped down the gospel into this very small thing. It's good news, maybe once in your life, but then it's kind of loses its value for the, for the rest.

How much, let me ask you this, how much have you considered recently your need for the righteousness of Jesus Christ credited to your account as the thing that enables you to stand fully before God Almighty with absolute freedom as the one who is loved by him with great joy?

How much have you thought about Jesus as all of those things for you?

How much have you rested in a righteousness that's not your own, but his?

Is it possible that you feel rung out, stretched thin, exhausted? Because if you were honest, you've actually been working for your standing with God and your sense of self-worth. Remember, I said those two things are inextricably bound together. That can happen. Even Christians can begin to live by works in practice.

Let me speak to this other thing though. This is something that is very prevalent in our culture, this zeal without knowledge thing. Let me, let's say it this way, as long as you're sincere, you're fine. You know people who sincerely believe crazy, ridiculous things, don't you? I certainly do. And what I want to tell them is your sincerity over this crazy thing is not helping anything. You need to change the crazy thing you believe and then get sincere about something that's worth believing in. What we believe matters. We want to be people with sincere faith in Christ, of course. The object of our faith must be, must be worthy.

And if you're here and you're not yet a Christian, we're glad you're here, first of all. But I would bring this up with you. You might be a moral person. You might think of yourself as a sincere person. Great, wonderful.

Have you trusted Jesus to save you from the wrath of God and to give you his righteousness so that you can stand before him?

Because there's no standing before him otherwise. And there's no sincere belief that matters apart from sincere belief in him. There's no standing on our own two feet before God. There's a righteousness that we need so desperately, and it comes only in Christ.

What do you think you get if you call on him? What do you think Jesus came to give you? Is it just a pattern, an example, a teaching? Or is he the one that came to make you righteous and to give you everything that that entails?

All right, so how do we get it? If that's, if you call on him, if what you get is the righteousness from God through faith in Jesus, how do you get it? If it's not by works or sincerity, it has to be by faith alone, which is what he says here. So, let's talk about

How is it that we call on the name of the Lord?

What does that mean? Pauls already said the way to receive the righteousness from God is through faith. Now he wants to prove it from the Old Testament. Verse five, he quotes a passage from Leviticus where the principle is whoever does the commandment shall live by them. In context, that was made to ethnic national Israel as a nation, and it was setting up the blessing and curse principle of the Mosaic Covenant, where if they as a nation would obey God's law, God would bless them and let them stay in the land. If they as a nation chose to rebel against God's law, he would send them into exile, and they would lose the land. So that's what's going on in Leviticus. If you, whoever does the commandment shall live by them.

The problem comes when you take that principle that was for that people in that time, and you remove it from the national to the personal, and you come up with a system that says, the way that I can get eternal life or salvation is through my obedience to the Mosaic law. Later Judaism did this. One commentator said, later Judaism could sum up this teaching with, blessing is contingent on obedience for me personally, not just for us as a nation, but for me personally. Meaning obey the law and God will love you and make you righteous. That's a righteousness based on the law. And he says, there is a righteousness based on faith, verses six and seven. Old Testament, he quotes Deuteronomy 30. That is a passage at the very end of the second giving of the law for the people of God. And in that passage, Moses told them, God has been gracious to you, and you don't need to go up to heaven to make him love you. And you don't need to descend down into the abyss to make him love you. He has been gracious to you and made covenant promises to you. They are near to you, the promises are.

And so Paul here is quoting that passage from Deuteronomy, and he's saying, a believer doesn't have to say, who will strive and ascend to heaven to get me a righteousness? And who will descend into the abyss and work really hard to bring up for me a righteousness as if we could buy our efforts, go and get it and bring it down or go down and bring it up. What he says is that actually the righteousness you need has already come down to you. Christ has already come down and died and descended into the depths of the earth and he has been raised. Everything that you need has already been accomplished for you. You don't need to extend effort to go up to heaven to get it or down to the abyss to bring it up. Christ has come, Christ has died, he's descended, he's been raised. The word is near you. And then he just says, you should believe it. Believe it. That's how he ends the passage. We could call it the mechanics of belief.

From our perspective, what does it look like for somebody to believe the gospel?

How do we actually call on him?

Paul says, it means to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. He's the King. And to believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. I've heard this passage used to create some sort of mechanistic, if you just say these words, you are sprung from hell and will enter heaven. You probably have heard it done that way as well. But that's not it. It's not a formulaic sort of thing. He's getting at how humans work. Belief happens in your heart, but the Hebrew conception of the heart is not just the feelings. It's your thinking and your affections and your will. It is intellectual. You have to understand that Jesus was raised from the dead, which means you understand that he died on the cross, which means that you understand that he lived a perfect life. You understand who he is and what he did with your brain. And you trust him and rely on him for everything. You believe with the whole of your being and cast yourself upon him. Corresponding to heart level faith is the ability to confess with your mouth that he is Lord, King over all and King over me. Confessing with the mouth, believing with the heart. That's how faith is expressed.

When we meet with some of you for membership, some of the elders, that's what we're looking for. Can you articulate the truth of the gospel? Can you tell me that you have thrown your whole life on Jesus and you're trusting him for salvation? Can you say that with your mouth? Is he your Lord? We confess and we believe.

And then he says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. Doesn't matter if you're Jewish or Greek. He's the Lord of all, gives riches to all who call on him. And he finishes this section by quoting Joel, who prophesied about an age to come where verse 13, *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

That promise still stands. We offer the gospel to every single human being that we can, that Jesus died for sinners and God raised him from the dead. And if you call on him, if you believe with your heart and confess with your mouth, you will actually be saved. And if you're in this room, you just heard that message and you are now responsible for what you do with it.

This doesn't contradict chapter nine that says it's all up to God. These two passages go together. We could say it this way. Those whom God is saving in chapter nine, the elect, the chosen, however you want to talk about it are those who will call on the name of the Lord in this life and will be saved at some point. What we observe is this process of people calling on the name of the Lord, but to put the chapters together, it's ...

those whom God calls, are going to call on him.

And the question really for you is, have you called on him? Have you called on Jesus to rescue you? Let's just get a little specific and practical with this for a minute. Because of where we live, some of you may have confessed Jesus as Lord publicly, but after a little bit of life, you really may not be sure if you really believe that anymore. Or it may not feel very real on your insides. You have a knowledge of Christ, but not a lot of zeal or sincerity for him. So, you might have the intellectual bit and you've said it, but there's something missing at the heart level. It's time to talk about that.

Some diagnostic questions for you.

Are you relying on Jesus for your standing with God? Or at the end of the day, are you really relying on your own performance?

Do you really think he forgives you of sin? Or do you walk around with a weight of guilt? Because you can't forgive yourself, which means you really don't know if God can forgive you either.

Have you received the righteousness from God by faith in Jesus? And is that your only hope?

Belief in the heart means that at some level, you know him, you love him, you're learning to obey him, makes you rely on him for righteousness, fearless of death. Do you believe?

Others of you may be in a different place where you really do believe, but for whatever reason, you've never confessed it with your mouth. You've never made a profession of faith. And you may have been coming to this church for a while and you've heard the gospel and you kind of think like, I think I understand and I think I believe, but maybe you've never joined a church or been baptized or said something about it. And what I want to say to you is true faith can't remain silent forever. It just can't do it. True faith has to say something at some point.

We can kind of go wrong on a couple of levels here. If we say it, but we don't believe it, we're like the dad who says, I love my kids. I love them so much. And then we don't feed them. We don't give them a bed. We don't give them a house to sleep in. That's just words. You don't actually love your kids if you don't, if you don't actually give them your affections and take care of them.

You could also be like fourth grade Hobie. I love to girl so much. She shall remain nameless. And with my fourth-grade heart, I pine and adored, pine for her and adored her and would let myself just get sick at heart. Did I ever open my mouth and say anything to her? No. It's in fourth grade. It's not how it works. So, there was no prospect of a relationship. I'd like to think somewhere she's thinking the same thing.

You can't just say it but not believe it. And you can't just believe it, but you don't say it. You believe with your heart, and you confess with your mouth.

Still others of you may have believed and you profess faith, but you really struggle knowing it's real. You're not the joyful Christian you hoped you would be. You don't feel like you're beating sin. Sin feels like it's beating you. And if that's where you're at, what I want to say to you is calling on the name of the Lord is not a one-time thing. Yes, it's the beginning of the Christian life and it is every point along the way until you wake up in his presence forever.

You never stop calling on the name of the Lord.

So, when you feel beaten up by your sin and when you feel like I'm pretty sure that I am going to be put to shame because of my sin is so great or because he's not going to deliver on his promises. It's time to call on him again. It's time to call on him and throw yourself upon his mercy and trust that his promises are true, and ask him from that place of resting in his righteousness to restore to you the joy of your salvation and to help you get off the floor and back in the fight against your sin. Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

If you call on Jesus, he answers. He can be counted on. He knows what we need and he provides it. A righteousness from God. The very righteousness of Jesus himself. If you call on him, that's what you get and everything thrown in.

Call on him by faith. Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. God is calling sinners to himself and friends, brothers and sisters, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we ask for your help. Help us to believe the truth. We can get spun out on all kinds of wrong ideas or our affections which once felt strong can wane and we can be cold in our love towards you. Our obedience can be lacking. What we pray, Lord, is that you would meet us, that you would remind us that when we call on you, you show up. So I pray for each of us, Lord, that we would, wherever we're at, either for the non-believer who needs to believe for the first time, let them call on your name, Lord Jesus. For us who have believed in our weary or frustrated or joyless, help us call on you, and would you help us to know, oh Lord, the riches of your grace. Meet us now as we come to the table. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.