

The word of faith

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[0 : 00] And we have got as far as chapter 10. And we're going to spend two Sundays looking at chapter 10.

! So to be honest, I'm only going to nibble at the edges of it today.! Let's ask God's help. Lord, we have some really thought-provoking things to think about this morning.

Lord, please enable speaker and hear us so that by the power of your Holy Spirit we may have eyes to see wonderful things out of your word.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Now we're looking in the book of Romans. We're looking in the chapters 9, 10 and 11, which have a particular emphasis and a particular argument and a particular line of thought.

And what I would like to do is pull some threads from that whole line of thought this morning. The question that he's answering is...

[1 : 17] Well, no. Let me wind that back. Here is a question that people ask. How is it that so many people, or that some people, or that so many people, or these particular people do not believe in Jesus Christ?

There's a question. How is it that in this world there is such a thing as not believing in Jesus Christ? And that's a question that an evangelist might ask and say, Why is it, Lord, that I go and preach the gospel?

It's the same gospel that people preach in other places. There people believe, but here people don't seem to believe it. It's an evangelist's question. It's an anxious parent's question.

How is it that there are so many members of my family who are believers in Jesus Christ, and yet this member of my family, or that member of my family, whom I love, who has heard just as much as everybody else, doesn't believe?

How can that be? It may be the question of a detached philosopher who is looking at the statistics, but let me say that Paul is not taking the position of a detached philosopher as he asks the question.

[2 : 29] You notice in chapter 10, verse 1, he says, Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

For I testify about them that they're zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. And he is dealing with this particular question of unbelief as it crystallizes around Israel.

And as Paul talks about this, because he does crystallize it around Israel, that's where he focuses this, he is far from detached. He said at the beginning of chapter 9, I speak the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit.

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

He says, I really care about this. It's not just a detached philosophical question, although you do need to think hard about it, but it's something that I really feel deeply and makes me long and pray and act.

[3 : 42] So as we come and look at this, please don't let us be simply detached about it. Let's catch something of Paul's involvement with this question.

Some people don't believe. Now why is it a particularly, why does it particularly crystallize around the question of Israel?

Well, here are some thoughts on that. That the salvation that is offered to the whole world is the great gift of Israel's God.

Who offers salvation to the whole world? Who is the only God who offers salvation to the whole world? He's Israel's God. He's the God who revealed himself in the Old Testament.

Why don't his people believe him? And the scriptures that Israel had, the most precious gift of all the nations in the world, they had the words of God.

[4 : 49] And it's those words that speak of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And how is it then that Israel, who had that enormous privilege, doesn't believe?

Or putting it another way, how is it that Israel clings to her scriptures, but understands them differently? And as Paul writes, he is thinking of orthodox Jews, of zealous Jews, who cling to the scriptures and say, these don't speak about Jesus Christ.

These speak about the law, and being kosher, and sticking to that, and that's the way of salvation. And Paul is saying, is answering the question, how can that be?

How can things go wrong? So much. And if you were around in the autumn, when we were looking at the previous chapter, I drew a little picture like this, a timeline of history.

Here is Israel moving forward through history, and learning more about God. And then there comes Jesus Christ, who is like a rock.

[6 : 01] And this rock is a rock, that some people can stand on, and be secure, but as he says in chapter 9, verse 33, see I lay in Zion a stone, that causes men to stumble, a rock that makes them fall.

The one who trusts in him, will never be put to shame. So some people trust in him, and gain absolute security, but other people stumble over him.

And Paul says, well how is it that Israel, more or less, en masse, the majority, seems to have stumbled over this rock.

And more than that, although some stand on the rock, and go forward, other people, these little blue people here, that's the other nations, get grafted in.

This is an amazing thing. It's Israel's salvation, yet when Jesus Christ comes, everything radically changes. It's grace, not race.

[7 : 10] And although some of Israel do believe, many don't, but many people, who are not Israel at all, get drawn in, and have the same blessings, that Israel's God gives.

And so, that's what Paul is looking at, and that's what's going on in these chapters. Is Mark here? No. Are you with me so far? Yes, okay, right. Now, why, do some people not believe?

Here are two ways, that Paul does not, answer the question. How is it, that some people are not saved? Two ways, that Paul does not, answer the question. He could, have said, but he doesn't say, ah, salvation is something, that you've got to earn, by working hard at it, and some people are just lazy.

He could have said that. He could have said, it's like an exam. And, there's the exam, 100%, 90%, 80%, 75%, and God puts the pass mark, he could have said this, but he didn't, God puts the pass mark, at whatever, 85%.

[8 : 31] So, obviously, some people are good enough, and there they are, smiling, we're good enough, we passed God's exam, and other people aren't good enough, and they failed, and they're just not good enough, they don't try hard enough, they're not spiritual enough, and the people, at the top, can congratulate themselves, and say, well, we're very good, look at us, did that all myself.

And the people who don't, well, they're, that's, that's why they're there, because they're just not good enough. And I'm saying, Paul does not answer the question that way, because that is not the nature, of Christian salvation.

Please look at, I'm going to pick up a scattering of verses, to line up with these things.

Chapter 3, verse 20, he says, no one will be declared righteous, in his sight, by observing the law, rather through the law, before we become conscious of sin.

So, he's saying, in particular, if we're thinking about, obeying, the law of Moses, it's not there, to give you a pass mark, if you want to put it, in those terms, the pass mark, is a hundred percent, and nobody ever gets it.

[9 : 48] It's impossible, to keep the law, in that sense. No one will be declared righteous, by observing the law. And also, he says, in 3.27, well, if it was, by keeping the law, then you could boast.

And Paul says, it absolutely, gives no room, for boasting. 3.27, where then is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle?

On that of observing the law? No, on that of faith. He says, faith, the salvation of Jesus Christ, by faith, does not allow people, to boast.

It just doesn't work, like that. The law, yeah, that would have done, but we're not talking about, by the law. So, that's one thing, that he doesn't say. He doesn't say, salvation is by human attainment. And here's another thing, that he doesn't say. He doesn't say, well, some people don't believe, because, it's just, down to their free will. He doesn't say, well, you see, God just, this is the way it is, God stands by, and waits.

[10:56] He can't interfere. He can't do anything, to make people believe. That's down to them. He just, is entirely hands off. And that's why, some people do believe, and some people don't.

He does not use, the free will argument. Here is, the free will argument, says, there's a human being, and they have the ability, to choose either, God or sin.

And they have that ability, and God just lets them choose. Oh, that's interesting, he chose that. Oh, that's interesting, he chose that. That way, of course, God could not ever guarantee, that anybody will be saved, because he just doesn't know, does he?

The God, who has that scenario, could not, give us a picture, in the book of Revelation, of the 144,000, redeemed, saints, in heaven, because God, just doesn't know, whether there will be, anybody in heaven, at all really, because they could all, choose not to.

You see, and God does not use, Paul does not use, the free will argument. The free will argument, the free will situation, would still allow boasting.

[12:10] People could say, well you see, although I didn't keep the law, I did have faith, so good for me. That was from me, that faith. And of course, it has an entirely, inadequate, understanding of sin.

Sinners, are sinners. Sinners are sinners, in every part of them. Their hearts are sinful, their choice, mechanism is sinful.

And as Paul, says himself, you know, what would sinners do, if you leave them, to themselves, they would never choose God. Not in a million years. And he says in chapter 3, verse 10, there is no one righteous, not even one.

There is no one, who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have become, together worthless. He has a very, very negative view, of the spiritual abilities, of human beings.

They would not, choose God. they would run away, from him. from him. We are born, like, spiritual woodlice, who don't come, to the light.

[13:19] Not spiritual moths, who do come, to the light. So there's two things, that he doesn't say. He doesn't use, use the idea, of legalism. And he doesn't use, the idea, that people, are entirely, free, and might do, have the capacity, to choose God.

So what I'm going to do, this morning, is to, give us, some, theological, toolkit, toolkit, so that we can, follow Paul's argument, through, chapters 9, through to 11.

And, we won't use, the toolkit, very much this morning. I'm just going to, get the toolkit out, and show you, some of these, different, theological, spanners, and, screwdrivers, and, knitting needles, and all the, things, whatever that they might be.

And I'm doing this, because, I think, we need these, to follow Paul's argument, otherwise, we'll get confused. And what I would like to do, is to give, some things a name.

It's very difficult, to talk about something, unless you give it a name. Once you've given it a name, you can start, talking about it. Naming things, or these particular things, is not meant, to remove, their mystery, but to help us, to understand, better, the depth, of the mystery, of what is going on here.

[14:56] So that we can say, at the end of it, as Paul says, oh, the depth, of the riches, of the wisdom, and knowledge of God. How amazing. And, so that we can, better, worship God.

God. So, let's, take a look at some of these, theological tools. Here is, tool number one. Free, moral, agency.

Free, moral agency. It's a theological term. It means, the reality, of personal responsibility. Even if you'd never, thought of the name.

Everybody knows, exactly what this means. I'm just giving a name for something. It's saying that people are responsible, for their moral choices. Now, God knows, that some people have a more difficult life, than others, and some people have advantages, that other people don't have, and so on.

So, I'm including that. There's, degrees of responsibility, but, basically speaking, we are responsible, for our moral choices, and people can't, blame God, for their wrong decisions.
[16:06] That's my point. So, if you choose, to do something, you can't blame God, and say, well, he made me do this wrong thing. And that, we find, in chapter 9, verse 19.

So, we looked at this, in previous weeks, but I didn't give it a name, but here, I'm backtracking, and giving this a name, and saying, there is, the rightness, of blaming people, if they sin.

So, in 9, 19, one of you will say to me, well, why does God still blame us, for who resists his will? You can't blame me, I did something wrong, but it's God's fault.

And Paul says, who are you, oh man, to talk back to God? He says, how dare you do that? How dare you try and blame God, for your sin?

You are a free moral agent. If you chose to sin, you don't blame God for it. You take the blame yourself. So, we are different, for example, from something like a gun.

[17:17] So, if a gun fires, say, well, it's the gun's fault, and the gun would say, no, I'm just a machine, it's somebody pulled the trigger, it's their fault.

Do you see what I mean? Now, a gun is different. We are not guns, we are not machines, we are people. And if we fire off sin, it's our fault. And rather than try to rationalize sin, and excuse sin, I once had a very, very big book, from a Dutch theologian, it was about that thick, called Sin.

And it had loads and loads of chapters, and in one point in it, the theologian says, do you know, that whatever you think about sin, and however you try and excuse it, and understand it, bottom line is, the only thing to do with sin, is confess it.

The only thing to do with sin, is to say, I was wrong. I was out of order. It's my fault. Can't get out of that. And you know, for some people, to come to that point, it takes them years.

They spend years saying, oh it's my parents' fault. Oh it's my background's fault. And, redemption, only comes, when we say to the Lord Jesus Christ, actually that's a load of nonsense.

[18:44] It's my fault. And I need to be forgiven. So, my first, theological tool, is that of, free moral agency, or the reality, of personal responsibility.

My second, theological tool, is the thought, as I've said, a moment ago, of, free will, in the sense, that people have power, within themselves, to choose God, and his ways, and to say, the Bible does not, teach free will, in that sense, it teaches free moral agency, it teaches that if you sin, it's your fault, but it does not teach, that everybody has the capacity, to either sin, or not, just as they please.

And in particular, in coming to Jesus Christ, Christ, in John 6, verse 44, Jesus says, no one, can come to me, unless the father, draws him.

No one, can come to me. We are spiritually, stuck. Our human, spirituality, our human, decision making, is not capable, of, turning to God, unless God, enables us to do that.

And, that's what Paul is saying, in quite a profound way, in chapter 9, verse 16, where he says, about, the bottom line, in salvation, he says, it does not, depend, on man's, desire, or effort, but on God's, mercy, does not, this is the bottom line, it doesn't depend, on, man's, desire, or effort, but on God's, mercy.

[20:52] Something for us, to come to terms with. I think, if you're a Christian, you've already come to terms, with that, but you just might not, realise it. Because when you, when you think of your salvation, do you ever say to God, I thank you God, that I, that I was clever enough, and spiritual enough, to choose you.

Or do you say, I thank you God, that when I was blind, you opened my eyes. I thank you God, that when my heart was hard, you softened it. I thank you God, that I, when I was busy running the other way, you came and drew me back.

Because without you, I would never have turned to you. I think you pray the second prayer, don't you? So, the free will, I'm saying, the Bible teaches, free moral agency, but it does not teach, free will, in the sense that I've, written it there.

So, my third, theological tool, is the, what is sometimes called, grace, just full stop, or salvation by grace, a little bit longer, or salvation by God's grace, and that, is a, sort of slogan term, which, means something like this, I, didn't deserve salvation, I never would have found, Christ, without God, I was blind, and deaf, and hard, and he opened my eyes, and opened my ears, and gave me a new heart, he saved me, not out of my, deserving, but out of his, mercy, and, as you can see, all these things, link up together, isn't that exactly, what, Paul says, in chapter 9, verse 15, where he

says, how does it all work?

Isn't it like, God says to Moses, I will have mercy, on whom, I have mercy, and I will have compassion, on whom, I have compassion, so, mercy, compassion, grace, more or less, meaning the same thing, certainly in the same ballpark, and God saying, how does it all work, with sinners? [23 : 13] Do I wait for them, to deserve something, and score a certain amount? He says, no, it doesn't work like that, at all, because, how it works is, I decide to have mercy, and who tells me, who to have mercy on?

I decide it, and I have compassion, on people, and how do I decide, who to have compassion, on people? Well, that's my business, I decide it, I will have mercy, on whom, I will have mercy, and I have compassion, on whom, I have compassion, and it is a free, unforced choice, from God, and I suppose, we might find that, rather humbling, and we think, well, surely there's something special, about me, and the answer is, no, the only thing, that made you, any different, from anybody else, was that God, decided, to have mercy on you, I will have mercy, on whom, I will have mercy, and I will have compassion, on whom, I have compassion, and the more you think, about it, the more humbling, it is, and you might start, to think, I'm not quite sure, about all this, don't think I like this, but just think about it, what it is doing, is putting sinners, in the place, that we ought to be in, and putting God, in the place, that he ought to be in,

God is, in charge, he is sovereign, the whole world, is in his hands, it's not that he's, in our hands, we're in his hands, and if God says, that's the way it is, that's the way it is, I have compassion, on whom I have compassion, and I have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and our best, course of action, is not to, argue with God about it, but humbly, to accept what he says, so that was, number four, salvation, by grace, sorry, what did I say, number three, number four, this is number four, so here is, a fourth, name, the free, offer, of the gospel, or the free, offer of the gospel, of Christ, or sometimes called, the free offer, I've missed something out,

I think in my notes, I meant to put, let me get my pen, let me get my pen, I meant to put, the general, call, of the gospel, and you say, the bible never, has the word, general call, and it doesn't, but it's giving a name, to something, that is in the bible, this is a name, which hopefully is helpful, and by this, we mean, the genuine, heartfelt, call, to all men, and women, to come, in faith, to Christ, for salvation, and if you like, that's what, chapter 10, is majoring on, it's saying, we, proclaim, this message, of faith, if you've got there, chapter 10, it's, he says it, in verse 8, the word, is near you, that is in your mouth, and in your heart, that is the word of faith, that we are proclaiming, he's saying, this is the message, it all fits together, you might not quite, have thought it fitted together, but it does, there is this, general call, there is this, free offer, and you said, and you're thinking, well hang on a minute, a moment ago, you said, that God has mercy, on whom we will have mercy, and you say, yes, it says that, and it also says, that there is this, general call, to all and sundry, to come to Jesus Christ, and you might get, a little bit of a headache, reconciling those two, well don't get the headache, just accept, that God is so great, that he can, say things, that, we find difficult, to grasp, but we are to, accept them in faith, and in worship, oh the wonders, of the riches, of the wisdom, and knowledge of God, he has compassion, on whom he will have compassion, but he, issues this, general call, and says to all sinners, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will be saved, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will be saved, and, chapter 10, verse 8,

Paul says, this is the word, that we are proclaiming, Paul is, gladly, describing himself, in his worldwide mission, to go, not only, to Israel, but, to Spain, and Italy, and Turkey, and Albania, and North Africa, and all the places, that he would be thinking, of going to, and say to, in each of those places, and you too, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will be saved, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will be saved, that is the word of faith, that he heralds, and in chapter 10, verses 14 and 15, he puts it, in this sort of, logical, forceful, logical way, the whole business, of faith, is calling on the Lord, and how can they call, in one they haven't believed in, verse 14, and how can they believe, in one of whom, they've not heard, and how can they hear, without someone, preaching to them, and how can they preach, unless they're sent, unless they're, apostled, unless they're, sent out, from God, with this gospel, and that's exactly, what they have been, as it is written, in the Old Testament, how beautiful, are the feet of those, who bring good news, he says, that's, what God is doing, he's sending people out, he's a missionary God, he's a calling God, he's a generous God, he's a, a God who likes, to bring people in, there is, the free, offer, of the gospel, number five, you with me, on the free, offer of the gospel, it's a glorious thing, it's a glorious thing, if you've ever been, involved, in speaking to people, in that sort of way, you will, have had the privilege, in your heart, of sort of,

feeling the things, that God feels, and thinking the thoughts, that God thinks, oh, that this person, could be saved, oh, that those people, that person's eyes, would be opened, if you were but, to come to Jesus Christ, and believe, you would be saved, what riches, would be yours, number five, the effectual call, now what this is, flagging up is that,

[30 : 35] Paul uses the word, call, with more than, one, meaning, so this, if you like, is God's, there's a general call, and there is, a special call, and it links up, with, God's, choice, and the Bible, uses the word, election, not, to mean, putting votes, into a, what do you put votes, into, ballot box, but, choosing, something, an election, is when you choose, the government, and God, chooses, people, and this has been referred to, in these chapters, and what I'm saying about, the effectual call, is that, God, so calls, that people, actually hear, and believe, this is a miracle, this is a great, miracle, if anybody, hears the gospel, and puts their trust, in Jesus Christ, that is a, profound, miracle, from the power, and the grace, of God, this is, the calling, that actually, gets through, to somebody, and if you like, it is, similar, you could think of,

Lazarus, dead, in the tomb, and, you try calling, to Lazarus, Lazarus come out, because he's dead, dead people, can't hear what you say, but Jesus, his word, has the power, to say, Lazarus come out, and out, comes the dead man, there was, power, in the word, of Jesus Christ, to bring life, to the dead, this is, an effective, the old fashioned word, which we tend to use, effectual, the call, that gets through, and there is, that, that, is, one of the ways, in which, which, Paul, uses the word, call, so, look in chapter 8, verse 30, this is, the call, which in God's, mysterious plan, is not just, the general call, but, God, chooses, to give, extra power, to his word, so that, as well as, the general call, on the outside, there is a, a sort of voice, of the Holy Spirit, within, within, which says, and this is you, you do this, this is for you, in verse 30, chapter 8, verse 30, those, he, predestined, he, also, called, and those, he, called, he, justified, and those, he, justified, he, glorified, you see, it's not the general call, he's not saying, he called everybody, and he justified everybody, and he glorified everybody, he's saying, there is a, within, that, general call, there is a, a specific, a specific, particular, personalized, call, and those, he, predestined,

I don't know who those are, God knows, those, he, called, and they, heard, and those, who, heard, he, justified, put them right with God, and those, he, justified, Paul's looking forward, they're going to be in glory, there is a, particular, personalized, effectual, call, and, he uses, the, the idea of call, to me, to be not that much different, to choosing, if you look back into, chapter, well, chapter 8, verse 30, we've looked at, but look at chapter 9, verse 11, which we have looked at, but I don't know whether you would have noticed it, because I didn't give a theological, spanner to, take this verse apart, chapter 9, verse 11, looking about, looking at, Rebecca's, twins, before the twins, were born, or had done, anything good, or bad, in order that,

God's purpose, in election, might stand, not by works, but by him, who calls, she was told, the older, will serve, the younger, and as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated, here's the undeserving one, not the earning one, the earning one, would be the older son, because he deserves, to be blessed, but it's the undeserving one, Jacob, who as you know, was called, the crafty schemer, he's the one, who gets blessed, and why does he get blessed, because God says, I'd like to bless him, this is my policy, this is the way, my policy works, my purpose, in election, did you notice that, not by works, but by God, who decides, who he's going to call, so you've got the, the, the, the, the effectual call, or the special call, which in this verse, he links up, says well this is, this is God, choosing to bless people, and he might say,

I don't think I can get on, with this, well, I didn't say it was easy, and Paul himself, doesn't say it's easy, he says, when he's finished, three chapters of this, he breathes a sigh, and says, wow, the depth, of the riches, of the wisdom, and knowledge of God, how unsearchable, his judgments, and his paths, beyond tracing out, well you think, well I thought, we could be able to, trace out his paths, and Paul says, no, I can see, you can see where the paths go, but to trace it out, it's beyond us, and I think, I think, as we think of it, in these terms, we can see, it is beyond us, so, there was number five, the effectual call, and I'm going to, put these two together, there is, so here's a, here's a technical word, reprobation, and then a more, obvious English word, hardening,

[37 : 06] I'm going to put those two together, so if God, chooses to bless, some people, what about, the other people, and reprobation, is not a term, I don't think, that's used in the Bible, but it does, the Bible, just occasionally, touches on this matter, and says, God would, speaking on, from God's point of view, there is a destiny, of those, whom God, does not call, but he just, omits to call them, and bypasses them, and, they have a destiny too, it's a, it's a, a terrible destiny, and that's, I

think, putting it from the Godward side, and we tremble, and we hesitate, to put ourselves, that say, that we can fully understand things, from God's point of view, but perhaps, we could, see things, from a human point of view, which is what, hardening, not entirely, but, more, humanly, the process, in which the sinner, freely chooses, and grows in, rebellion, and rejection, of God's kind, and reasonable, invitations, so, a mysterious process, there is such a process, as hardening, you may even, have seen it happen, that people, who begin, by being a little bit open, then they get put off a bit, and then they use that, as an excuse, to get put off more, and, a process goes on, by which they say, well don't talk to me, about Christian things, and they get harder, you may even be conscious, of that process, in your own heart, ebbing and flowing, things that you used to be, really keen on, you're a bit indifferent, about now, and the prayer is,

Lord don't let my heart, get hard, don't let my heart, get hard, reprobation, I'm saying, we could think of it, from God's point of view, and the hardening process, and Paul talks, at some length, about this, he talks about Pharaoh, in chapter 9, verse 17, you remember Pharaoh, in the days, of the Exodus, Pharaoh, Moses went to Pharaoh, and said, God says, let my people go, that they may worship me, and Pharaoh says, I don't know the Lord, I'm not going to do, what he says, and do you remember, that process, by which, the plagues, racked up, the pressure on Pharaoh, and he almost got, to the point of agreeing, and then, he changed his mind, and having got used, to the idea, of changing his mind, he got better at it, and then again, he would agree, with more pressure, and in the end, he was totally hard, there is a process, of hardening, it's a process, it isn't, just something that God says, right you're going to be hard, like that, it generally, includes, the to-ing and fro-ing, of hearing from God, and refusing him, and all of that sort of thing, as free moral agents, but, bottom line,

God is in charge, of that, chapter 9, verse 17, for scripture says, to Pharaoh, I raised you up, you hard, rebellious, arrogant person, I raised you up, for this very purpose, that I might display, my power in you, and my name, might be proclaimed, in all the earth, you think, you've, put a spanner, in the works, of my purposes, but actually, I had you in my hand, all the time, and even your arrogance, serves my purposes, therefore, verse 18, God has mercy, on whom he wants, to have mercy, and hardens, whom he wants, to harden, that's fearsome, isn't it, what a terrible statement, that God, is able, to harden people, Jonathan Edwards, once preached, a sermon, which shocked people, about us, about us, being in the hands, of God, and, the, his, his action point, was, cry out to God, because you, don't realize, how, your life, hangs, sort of, by a thread, and the thread, is in the hand, of God, cry out to him, and say,

Lord, I need to be saved, don't let me get hard, you could make me hard, if you wanted to, please don't let me get hard, please show mercy to me, I can't manage this, on my own, I'm in a complete, pickle, unless you save me, there is, this process, of hardening, and we tremble, to speak about it, the Bible, speaks about it, doesn't, it's not a button, that the Bible, keeps pressing, but, it is there, and, my final, couple of, points here, righteousness, righteousness, by, faith, in Christ, compared, with righteousness, by human, works, or works, of the law, or, own righteousness, people can put, the same idea, in different terms, and we find that, in chapter 9, verses 31, and 33, and chapter 10, verses 3, and 4, which we look at, you see,

Christ, comes upon the scene, comes upon the scene, in history, comes upon the scene, in your life, and, he, asserts, here is a way, to be right, with God, it is not, by you, doing the best you can, or turning over, a new leaf, it is by you, abandoning that, and saying, you've got to save me, the righteousness, by which I stand, has got to be, the righteousness, that you, God, give me, through what, Jesus Christ achieved, don't understand, exactly how that all happened, but I know, that that's what I need, and, as Christ comes, there's a moment, of, of, of, of crisis, and people, might not always, respond rightly, and well to it, and in chapter 9, verse 30, says, well what should we say, says the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness, that is by faith, and when it was said to them, you, wretched, messed up,

[44 : 05] Gentiles, you can be clean, and right, and stand before God, boldly, because of what, Jesus Christ did, and the Gentiles, said, yes please, but Israel said, no I don't want that, I'll do it my own way, do you see what he's saying, the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness, that is by faith, but Israel, who pursued a law, of righteousness, has not attained it, why not, because they pursued it, as if not by faith, but as if by works, they stumbled over, the stumbling stone, they stumbled over, Jesus Christ, and he says the same thing, in chapter 10, doesn't he, my heart's desire, and prayer to God, for the Israelites, is that may be saved, I testify

about them, they are zealous for God, but it's just a stupid, zealous, a stupid zeal, it's not based on knowledge, since they did not know, the righteousness, that comes from God, they sought, to establish, their own, they sought to build, something up, and say, this is what I've done,

I'm righteous, look how kosher I am, look how generous I am, da da da, they did not submit, to God's own righteousness, do you get the flavour, that word submit, it's a flavour of pride, isn't it, they were too proud, they were too full of themselves, to submit, Jesus Christ says, I can give you righteousness, just as a gift, you can just have that, off the shelf, if you like, and the Jews say, no, no, no, no, see how human pride, in this, exemplified, hugely, in this particular case, is the enemy, of faith in Jesus Christ, they sought, their own righteousness, righteousness, instead of, trusting, the Lord, they tried to do it, by doing, instead of trusting, well those are the, whatever, eight or nine, ideas, which Paul is using, and combining, and fitting together, in these chapters, and so I, haven't done very much, apart from, just give you those, ideas, ideas, but,

I don't know, whether you get the sense, of how they all fit together, they do fit together, faith in Christ, brings us into this world, of, grace, of, grace that is not, because I've done anything, and it must come from God, and how does it come from God, well mysteriously, and deeply, it comes from a God, who says I have compassion, on whom I will have compassion, and how is it, that some people don't believe, well it comes, I mean, they can't blame God, they're free moral agents, they can't blame God, well how is it, God who says, I have mercy, on whom I have mercy, and I harden, whom I will harden, it all fits together, in understanding truly, and deeply, the way of grace, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I want to give some, bullet points of, response, and I think our first response, is to worship God, if we can, grasp, a little bit of, what's being said here, or let it grasp us, there is wisdom here, that makes us, rather than saying, yeah I got the hang of that, yeah I got the hang of that, got the hang of that, makes us say, wow,

I didn't realise, it was so deep, and so amazing, so beyond, my, human capacity, and that's what Paul does, isn't it, he worships God, and I want to say, it should make us, worship God, and I think, it also, should give us, humility, about our own, spiritual abilities, the gospel does that, doesn't it, the gospel, makes us, humble, unless we, unless we become, like little children, we can't enter, the kingdom of God, but here are some more, hooks to hang that, humility on, and to help us, to be humble, where did your faith, come from by the way, it was a gift of God, who originally, thought of being saved, of you being saved, wasn't you, was it, it was God, your salvation, has its origins, back in the deep, mysteries, of the plan of God, before the world was made, what was God, thinking about, before he made, subatomic particles, and quarks, and supernovae, he was thinking about you, he was thinking about you, and how much he wanted you, to be with him in glory, and all the things, that he would do, to ensure, that that would be so,

I think it gives us, a deep gratitude, for salvation, in Jesus Christ, it is so easy, for us to think, that salvation, and being a Christian, we can contract, that thought, to oh, it's what I do, on a Sunday morning, and it's what I do, at such and such a time, during the week, it's almost like a hobby, almost like a, a bit of, you know, my leisure activities, and this brings us back, to the reality of saying, it isn't that, is it, earth shattering, it is, earth shattering, it is, deeper, than the creation, of the planets, that God, chose, you, and, sent his son, to die for you, and through some, extraordinary, processes, in time, and space, brought you to faith, and through further extraordinary and miraculous processes will bring you to glory.

[50 : 23] And you cannot begin to understand what that will be like. So I'm saying deep gratitude for salvation in Christ. Being a Christian isn't just a tick on the census form, is it?

Roman Catholic, Baptist, Jedi, Christian. Oh, Christian! Yeah, yeah. If we've grasped Paul's way of thinking of this, this doesn't make us into abstract philosophers, but it makes us people who pray intensely.

Now maybe you've been listening to this and you think, I haven't understood much of it, but I know that I'm not part of it. I know that I could not honestly say, yep, this is all to do with me.

In which case I would say, what this is saying is, how intensely you should make this a matter of prayer. I want to be in on this, and I gather that it is actually much more difficult and much more, much more big.

You can't say much more big, I'm going to say it. But it's bigger than I thought it was. And if I'm to have this, Lord my God, you must help me, you must do a miracle, intense prayer, for your own salvation.

[51 : 57] I think I'll be a Christian. No you won't, not like that you won't. Being a Christian is a sort of on your knees, crying out to God, heart, business with God.

You don't actually have to be on your knees, but you know what I mean. It's that sort of weightiness about what it is to be a Christian. And then, the salvation of others.

Did you grasp something of Paul's depth of concern, where he says, I could almost wish that I was in, that I'd been sent to hell, if that would save some of these other people.

It's a good preacher's trick, isn't it, to say to people, do you feel this, do you long for this, but it's not a million miles from the right thing to say, is it? This is what Paul said.

I really could wish, because salvation is so important. And so profound, I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

[53 : 04] I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers. Do we have anything of that? Could we have more of that? And then I'm going to come back and say, having said all of that, oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord or been his counselor? Who has ever given to God so that God should repay him?

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.