

Everyone Who Calls on the Name of the Lord will be Saved

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[0 : 00] Please keep your Bibles open, page 921. That would be great. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that the revelation of yourself that you have given to us is consistent from beginning to end.

We thank you that you have made yourself known to us, especially in your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to understand your word tonight. Apply it to our lives. Open up our hearts to you that we might believe and confess. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, you lifted me from where I was, set my feet upon a rock, humbled that you even knew about me.

Now I have chosen to believe, believing that you've chosen me. I was lost, but now I have found. I've found Jesus. I've found Jesus.

Well, these are some of the lyrics to a great song by a Christian band called Delirious. It's a very powerful song of personal testimony, telling the world of the reason that our lives are different.

[1 : 22] We've found Jesus. But this song was such a controversial theological piece for us back in the day when I was involved in music ministry at St. Hillary's.

Oh, it was just the cause of so many arguments. Should we say that we found Jesus? Or should we be singing, Jesus found me?

Did we choose him or did he choose us? And then, of course, if he did choose us, well, can we be blamed for our sin? And then, if it's all God's choice anyway, why bother giving testimony to others? Why bother singing a song like that even? Why bother telling people about Jesus? Because it's not going to make any difference to them if they're not already chosen.

Well, I remember having all those questions and more. You can imagine our music meetings. Nightmare. But I wonder if any of you had some of those questions after the message last week.

[2 : 38] I wonder if you've ever had them as you've been reading the scriptures at other times. Last week, in reading Romans chapter 9, Paul's argument was, if the Israelites were God's special people, the recipients of God's promises and his glory and his covenants and his law, etc., how come they weren't all believing in Jesus now?

If Jesus is the one that was promised to them as Messiah, how come so many of them in Paul's day and indeed in our day have rejected him?

Has God's promise to them, his word, failed? That's the question. And Paul's answer to this question is multifaceted, like a diamond.

And he's dealing with different aspects of it throughout these three chapters in Romans, from different perspectives, if you like. But he began by showing that it was never God's intention to save everyone who was a national Israelite.

Salvation, the Old Testament says, has always been by God's sovereign, free, gracious, electing choice.

[4 : 02] Some he chose to be a faithful remnant who would be saved. And others he hardened in their sin. And all we learnt for his own glory, his own purposes, his own fulfilling of his plan for the world.

Furthermore, the fact that salvation was always by God's free electing choice and not by national or ethnic identity, meant that non-Jewish people, Gentiles, could also become part of God's family. It was God's choice. And this is exactly what was happening in Paul's day, particularly through his mission as apostle to the Gentiles. People who were once thought to be totally off God's radar were now being called my people by God, children of the living God.

God's mercy in electing people for salvation was extending across the world to every nation, every tribe, every language, every tongue. But at the end of chapter 9 and now into chapter 10, Paul is returning to the problem of Israel's unbelief.

And he's seeking more explanations of their current position of rebellion. Now, remember, in all of this, he is still talking in the context of his passionate love for his own people.

[5 : 36] He has a yearning for the Jews to be saved that isn't satisfied no matter how many Gentiles keep pouring into the house of God.

He says, Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them, that is the Israelites, is that they may be saved.

I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. We spoke last week about how tragic it was that the Jewish people who'd received so many privileges from God were still in unbelief.

But the tragedy is now heightened because Paul says it's not as if this was a bunch of people who were ignoring spiritual things and living their own selfish, hedonistic lives.

No, they were zealous, enthusiastic, passionate about the things of God. Some of the Jewish women I know are like this today.

[6 : 48] They are in study groups, you know, three times a week, studying the Torah, the rabbis teaching. They're going to synagogue services. They're keeping kosher food laws.

They're not driving their cars on the Sabbath. They're covering their hair. They're even going to monthly ritual purity baths.

But even in one's passion and sincerity, it is possible to be passionately and sincerely wrong. Passion and zeal. Passion and zeal mean nothing if they're not directed to the truth, not enlightened to what it is that God truly requires of us.

And that's not easy for us to admit in our society sometimes. It's not easy for me to admit. I find that I get along better with people who are passionate and zealous for religious things, even if they're not necessarily, you know, my evangelical Christian beliefs.

[7 : 59] I just feel like we have so much in common. But, and we feel like personal conviction carries such a huge moral weight.

We can't argue with someone if they say, no, this means something to me. This is fulfilling to me. But God teaches us here that sincere, devout Jews, just the same as sincere, devout Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, sincere, devout, nice people, are not pleasing God with their devotion because their zeal is not enlightened.

What have they missed then? What was the problem for the Jews? For, Paul goes on to say, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness.

For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Well, maybe you're thinking, ah, hang on a second.

I thought Romans 9 to 11 was like, oh, confusing and weird and about election and spooky stuff like that. This just sounds like what Paul's been talking about all along.

[9 : 29] Salvation by faith. And you'd be right. I said that Paul's answer was multifaceted. Chapter 9 tells us about salvation from God's perspective.

God's word never fails. Nothing thwarts his plans. Nothing is outside his control. Not even unbelief. His ultimate will is to show his glory and his holiness and his mercy to the universe.

And so to do that, he graciously turns some people from sin that they've chosen and he justly allows some people to remain and be hardened in it.

But to us, from our perspective, this election is invisible. It's beyond time. It's completely foreign to our understanding.

We can't work out who will or who will not be chosen. We can't look at someone and say, God will never choose you.

[10 : 39] You're too far gone. You're not the right sort. Even those that we feel are lost causes to us, a parent, a child, a brother, a sister, a spouse, close friend or colleague, no matter how much evidence we have, we cannot say, you're not chosen.

Because it's God's choice and it's far beyond our understanding. And perhaps, perhaps the message for you tonight, even as we just get into the passage, perhaps the message you need to take home is don't give up.

Don't make that decision yourself. It's not yours to make. You never know what God has in store. You do not know his plans. From his perspective, it's all right.

So we don't know. But we do know that he is merciful and just and that there is a way to be saved and that anyone who finds it has been brought there by God.

But this way is not focused on election. It's focused on a person, Jesus Christ. and so now from the perspective of the Israelites, there was indeed another facet to why they had not received what had been promised them.

[12 : 22] They had not sought the righteousness that was offered to them by God. They had sought to establish their own righteousness, their own right standing before God, their own merit.

And in this way, isn't it true that Israel is just a microcosm of the rest of the world? We're all seeking to establish our own righteousness, our own sense of worth to be in God's heaven.

For them, for the Israelites, it was just more obvious. They had a law that they wanted to outwardly obey. to earn salvation.

But you only have to go to an average Aussie funeral to know that we're all hoping to tip the scales in favour by being good people.

But God has only given one means for the salvation of Israel and for the salvation of the world for you and me. The only way to be saved is this, to submit and it is a submission for those who want to earn their way, to submit to the righteousness that God offers you in Jesus Christ.

[13 : 49] For the way of salvation known to us is a who of salvation. Jesus Christ, the end of the law.

God is a end of the law. It's a slightly tough one. Because on one hand, it could mean that the law is over and done with.

Now that Christ has come, the old covenant is simply replaced by the new. But it could also mean that Christ has fulfilled the law.

the word telos that is translated end could have that meaning as well. And so that could mean that by putting our faith in him, Jesus, who was obedient in life and death, fulfilling every command of God, by putting our faith in this one, we too have actually fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law.

And we're set right with God. Well, in fact, both of these things are true and they go together. The law's place in God's plan of salvation has come to an end.

[15 : 03] It is finished because Christ has fulfilled it. He's wrapped it up. He's done what was needed. God gave the law for a purpose to set before the Israelites his holy requirements and to show them that they could not possibly fulfill such requirements on their own, to lead them to understand that it would have to be a gracious act of God on their behalf that would do this for them.

That gracious act would thereby show his glory, his holiness, his mercy. God in human flesh, there is no more need for the law.

It was never of use for righteousness, Paul says in chapter nine, if it was approached with respect to works, but now it is no longer needed because the one to whom it pointed has come.

Paul uses two Old Testament statements to prove this and it's in a way that I found absolutely fascinating. He contrasts Moses with himself, Moses with Moses.

And he's trying to show the Israelites that even in their own Torah, if they were to understand the law as a means of righteousness with respect to works, that there would be a contradiction.

[16 : 56] He's saying you should have twigged to this if you were listening carefully. So firstly he quotes Deuteronomy chapter nine, Moses saying whoever does these things, that is the commands of the law, whoever does these things will live by them.

But one Kings says that Israel knew that all people were sinners. They knew they were lost. And so no one, not one of them, could expect to do all those things perfectly.

So, did that mean that Moses was saying that life was out of their reach? Well, Deuteronomy 30, which we heard read tonight by Matt, emphatically states the opposite, doesn't it?

Surely this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven that you should say, who will go up to heaven for us and get it for us so that we may hear and observe it?

Neither is it beyond the sea, or Paul translates abyss, that you should say, who will cross to the other side of the sea for us and get it for us so that we may hear and observe it?

[18 : 17] No, the word is very near to you. It is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe. Was Moses confused? If they were to live by their obedience to every part of the law, knowing that they were sinners, how could he say that it was not too hard for them, that it was near to them, that it was achievable?

Well, as God's prophet, Moses is speaking about the time after the Israelites have been exiled, and he knew that God would provide a way for the people to be righteous with him.

Earlier in that same chapter, we heard him speaking about God circumcising their hearts and we know that this is that future hope that was spoken of by the prophets, a future hope for a time when God would enable the people to be law fulfillers by his powerful work on their behalf and in them. And so what Paul is trying to show is that the full truth of what Moses was saying to the Israelites was not fully revealed until Christ came, but that when he came, it was fulfilled.

And so Paul applies these words to Christ, having a look at verse 6 in Romans chapter 10. verse 6. But the righteousness that comes from faith says, do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down, or who will ascend into the abyss, that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.

[20 : 19] The sea and the abyss were interchangeable ideas. But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.

That is, the word of faith that we proclaim, the gospel. Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Christ has come. The commands of God have been fulfilled by the perfect son of God, the Messiah, and the law has come to an end.

Do you notice that Paul has put Christ in the bit of that reading where the Israelites were saying, oh, we get the law from up there and bring it to us, or across the sea and bring it to us.

That's where Christ is. That's where Christ is. And they can't do anything to bring Christ down from heaven or up from the dead. God's already done that.

[21 : 23] God has already come to them in Christ, lived the obedient life, died a sacrificial death, raised to life again. Christ has come down from heaven.

Christ has been raised from the dead. Those things have been done. It is fulfilled. And so the word of salvation truly is near to us now, just as Moses predicted.

And it is as simple and accessible as he was trying to tell the Israelites. It's as simple as word and belief in our mouth and in our heart.

heart. Now, Moses himself, I don't think, could imagine what exactly the word in the mouth and the heart would be.

But Paul makes it abundantly clear. You confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.

[22 : 35] this is what it means to be saved. If this is what you need to hear tonight, if this is the bit for you, just pause and take note.

If you've never known what it means to be saved, this is it. And remember that the word Lord didn't simply mean master to Paul's readers.

It was the word that the Jewish people used to refer to God, Adonai, so that they didn't speak his personal name because it was so holy. And it was the title given to the Roman emperor, to Caesar. And so to say that Jesus is Lord is no trite slogan. It is to say that Jesus is both God and king of the earth.

And Paul says this is a truth that is clearly proven by the fact of Jesus resurrection. It's no surprise to me that belief in the resurrection has been the thing that Satan has been attacking in the Western Church over the last 200 years.

[23 : 58] Without the resurrection, to paraphrase Paul in another one of his letters, we're finished. The resurrection is God's vindication, his big yes, that all that Jesus said and did was absolutely right and true and effective.

Everything he taught was what God wanted him to say. His death was actually paying for our sins. He is the Lord of heaven and earth because he is raised from the dead.

Saving faith means a firm trust in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Maybe tonight this is the word for you. You're not really absolutely 100% sure on that.

You'd like to be, but you're just not at the moment. Can I encourage you to pray about that, to ask God to strengthen your understanding and faith?

And also, Wayne's photocopied some parts of a book about proofs for the resurrection and how we can be firm in our trust that Jesus was raised from the dead.

[25 : 25] And I've got some of those. I'll have some of those after the service if that's what you need to do. Well, Paul goes on still using the language of Moses' statement to show how God saves in that way, the mouth and the heart.

Romans 10 verse 10. For one believes with the heart and so is justified and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

Now, don't think that Paul is setting the heart and the mouth against each other or that they're like two separate parts of a process that, you know, Christians have to have.

It's this kind of Jewish way of saying the same thing in two different ways. You'll see it in the Psalms all the time. salvation is through justification.

It's being put right with God through God's own righteousness given to us through Christ. And belief in that, belief in Jesus Christ is not a weak thing.

[26 : 37] It's a powerful thing. So powerful. the highest task of a spiritual being made in the image of God to believe.

It brings salvation. But belief and confession are inseparable. For out of the heart the mouth speaks.

There's no such thing as a private faith. faith. If it never comes out of your mouth in any way, then I think the Bible would say to you, you better take another look to check that it's really there.

I'm not saying that everyone should be yelling Jesus is Lord in a megaphone in their neighbor's windows every afternoon and morning, or maybe just not the morning.

But it's that old question which is always a challenge to me. If you were arrested on the charge of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

[27 : 48] Or would you get off? Perhaps that's the thing that you need to bring to God in prayer tonight. Perhaps that's the challenge for you. And Paul goes on just to show once more that this way of salvation, or should I say this who of salvation, applies universally to Jews and Gentiles.

And he quotes in the Old Testament again, this time from Isaiah 28 and from Joel 2. The scripture says, no one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.

The same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Do you notice how this is the outworking of the character of God that we met in chapter 9?

If you weren't here last week, check it out for yourself when you get home. This is the God of mercy and compassion. Look at the piling up of Paul's words to show the scope of God's love.

He's just like, no one who believes will be put to shame. There's no distinction. He's Lord of all. He's generous to all who call and everyone who calls on his name shall be saved.

[29 : 10] It's a big scope, a big promise because he's a big-hearted God. And there's no tension for Paul between this truth and the truth of God's election.

No one who calls for salvation is left standing there alone told, sorry, you'd like to get in but you're not elect. No, all who call have been enabled by God to do so.

And so all who call are saved. Anyone with a stirring for the name of Jesus is being called by God to call on him and they will be saved.

Jew, Greek, Indian, Chinese, Pakistani, Australian, Sudanese, young, old, good, bad, indifferent, all who call on the name of the Lord, Jesus, shall be saved.

And yet there remains the question of how a person comes to call upon the Lord. What's the usual way in which we can expect this to happen? If God is in charge of everything, why do we bother putting ourselves on the line to be laughed at or rejected at or persecuted to share the gospel?

[30 : 37] Perhaps you've heard that story, that experience of William Carey, the 18th century father of modern missions, who was up against this kind of perverse application of the doctrine of election when he's trying to get people's support for his missionary trips to China.

He's going around different churches and telling them what he wants to do to save the lost. And a pastor stands up and says to him, young man, sit down.

When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me. well, is that what the apostle Paul is telling us tonight?

Is that what God is telling us tonight? That he'll do it without us? No, isn't it fascinating that in this section where he's talked so powerfully about God's electing choice, that he would then go on to talk so eloquently about the need for evangelism.

But how are they to call on the one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?

[31 : 57] And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. But not all have obeyed the good news.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

We're keen of the saying, actions speak louder than words, aren't we? And so often that is true. But in this case, words have power.

God's designed the universe, words, by words, and around words, and that what we actually believe when we hear things, affects our very soul.

Do you know that? Do you know that that is what you are designed to do as a human being? That words go to your soul? You see, although faith is given to us through God's call, as beings made in the image of a speaking, relational, Trinitarian God.

[33 : 15] Belief is formed in us, rises in us, through relational communication of the gospel, through powerful words.

The content of the gospel has to hit us in some way, and most often it's by someone who is sent to tell us about it.

They don't have to be a missionary, they could just be sent by God to sit next to us on a train, or at work, or at church, or we read about it in the words of God.

Yet, sometimes people do have dreams and visions, and we hear about those stories, like in the Middle East, where there's no one to tell them about the gospel. But you know, when I hear those stories, there is a common thread.

the dreams drive people to go and search out someone to tell them about Jesus, or to get a Bible, because it's through hearing that faith comes.

[34 : 22] And we mean hearing by receiving the message in some way, and I'm not saying that if you're deaf, you can't receive the gospel, but it's the words, the content, the message of the gospel.

It's explained and faith rises in us at God's creation. Now, we don't have time to talk more about evangelism tonight, and you saw that cool video, but perhaps the challenge of this passage for you is to start putting some energy into addressing that little niggling voice in the back of your head or in a corner of your soul that is saying to you that God wants you to have beautiful feet.

Why don't you talk to him about that tonight? Well, finally, Paul returns to the Israelites. If the truth about salvation by God's gift of righteousness in Jesus, which comes by faith in what was heard, was clear in Scripture, or at least Scripture pointed them to him, how come they haven't got it? Could it be that they actually haven't heard, or they haven't understood it, and so they're still waiting? No. It says in verses 18 to 21, and I won't read them, but you can have a look.

Their voice has gone out to all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. that's Psalm 19, speaking of God's revelation of himself to the whole world, and Paul is now applying that to the gospel that has gone to the Israelites.

[36 : 11] God has made himself known as he is to them, and Christ's resurrection has also been a powerful communication of God's truth that all could hear.

wherever there are Jews at that time, those events were known. They had indeed heard both of the Torah and of Christ.

But did they not understand? No, Paul says, the Israelites are not the people of no understanding. That's the Gentiles. The Gentiles have always had that title.

But God has shown himself to the people who had no understanding, and they have found him. Looks like we could sing that song after all.

No, it's not for lack of understanding on the Israelites' part, or from lack of hearing. It's because of disobedience that the Israelites have not yet turned to Jesus.

[37 : 18] But of Israel, he says, verse 21, all day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. Well, has that day ended?

Is the Lord still holding out his hands to the Israelites? The story is not over, and this is exciting.

We're going to learn about that next week. we're going to learn that the disobedience of Israel, far from being a thwarting of God's plan, is part of his work to bring them back to him.

So, tune in same time, same place, next week to hear what God has in store for them. So, as we continue in this meaty, weighty, long teaching, let this remain with you.

God is a God who keeps his promises. His word never fails. His gospel is trustworthy. He is a God of mercy and justice.

[38 : 32] He raised Jesus from the dead and made him Lord of all. And he is a God who offers us righteousness through our faith in him.

Have you heard? Have you trusted? Will you not give up on your friends? Do you believe the resurrection?

Do you confess? Will you testify? Will you choose life? Amen.