

How To Be Saved

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 November 2001

Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 25th of November 2001.

The preacher is Paul Barker. His sermon is entitled How to be Saved and is based on Romans 10.1-21.

And you may like to have opened the passage from Romans 10 on page 921 in the Pew Bibles. For those who are visiting today, this is a part of a sermon series that I've been preaching through Paul's letter to the Romans.

And today we're at chapter 10. Let me pray that God helps us to understand and also to apply what we read from his word here. God, we thank you that you speak to us clearly through the words of scripture.

We pray that we may have understanding, but also that your words may be written in our heart by your spirit, so that we may not only understand, but also do and bring glory to Jesus in our lives.

[1 : 12] Amen. My grandfather is fiercely independent, which is probably fairly typical for somebody of his age. He's nearly 94.

He lives at home alone in the same home that he's lived in since the 1930s. He hates having anything done for him at all. And I think it was just about five years ago that he fell from the garage roof while he was repairing the roof.

And there have been several occasions in the last, I guess, 10 years where he's fallen out of trees in the garden as he's pruned the apricot and apple trees. He zealously attempts to look after himself.

He's made some concessions in the last couple of years. He's had two strokes, mild ones, one recently and one last year. So now he has at least meals on wheels.

And at the insistence of my uncle to my grandfather's great dislike, he now has a cleaner that comes in every fortnight to clean the house. Now, my grandfather's not unique.

[2 : 14] I know that, though stubbornness is probably a Barker trait. None of us likes to be dependent on anyone. None of us likes to move into old age needing to rely more and more on other people.

And I'm sure, in fact I know, there are people here who probably are similar to my grandfather who've refused to let other people do their shopping and so go shopping and risk falling over. And other people who continue to try to be independent and so on in ways that maybe time is catching up on us and we ought not to be. We don't like to admit defeat.

We don't like to admit that we can't do something. We don't like to admit that we need someone else's help. It doesn't just apply, of course, in old age. Children growing up are insistent, usually, that they do it themselves.

I remember my first attempt at cooking a meal for the family. It was a terrible disaster. We ate at about 10 p.m. But every 10 minutes I kept saying to my mother and my sisters and in the end my father as well, I'm doing it myself.

[3 : 22] We like to be independent. The thing is that that sort of physical independence often spills over into our spiritual life as well.

We strive to do it ourselves. We strive to attain our own righteousness. If righteousness is a summary word for where we ought to be as Christian people or as people generally, we try too hard to do it ourselves, to be independent spiritually.

You see it spiritually when people think they can live the spiritual or Christian life without the influence of God's word or prayer or Christian fellowship or church involvement. I see it sometimes in the way people express things in funeral interviews or when you read obituaries in the newspaper or in other places about how great somebody was, a loving person.

They'll do anything for everyone as though somehow their own achievement, their own righteousness has been attained. You rarely hear in a funeral interview or read in an obituary, this person was an out-and-out sinner, but they trusted God and he's in heaven.

They used to say that two, three, four hundred years ago, but it's language that seems to be dropping out of obituaries and funerals. Well, ancient Israel was like that spiritually.

[4 : 45] In ancient Israel, by and large, they were zealous in their pursuit of righteousness by faithfully keeping every detail of the law of the Old Testament. St. Paul himself was like that before he was converted to be a Christian.

He was a Pharisee, a Jewish leader before his conversion, and he was zealous like the others to become righteous through attaining the law of the Old Testament.

But all that effort was in vain. Because in the end, the race for righteousness, if I can put it like that, is too far, too long, too high, too hard for anyone to attain the righteousness that God requires of us. In the end, you see, ancient Israel or modern Australian, we are not good enough to attain our own righteousness. Well, we might want to say to people like the ancient Israelites and people who live pious and good lives, well, you've tried very hard, you've done very well, well done, I'm sure God will have mercy on you for your effort.

I mean, in the end, surely it's the effort that matters. But not at all. Paul says of the ancient Israelites who tried very hard and expended lots of effort in the quest for righteousness, that in the end, their effort, their determination, their sincerity, their zeal, came to nothing.

[6 : 14] Their striving was on the basis of their own works and their own attainment. We saw that at the end of chapter 9 in verse 32. Paul says that they strived. It uses a racing analogy as though they're running a race striving for the finishing tape.

They strived for the righteousness that's based on the law. And they didn't succeed. It was a righteousness based on works, their own works, their own attempt at independent righteousness. And they failed, Paul says. All the pursuit, all the zeal, all the energy, determination that we might put into some sort of quest for our own righteousness is worth nothing in the end.

God's not going to say, well, you tried hard. Well done. The quest for our own righteousness is a vain quest. One of the hymn writers says, could my zeal, no respite, no, all for sin could not atone. Even if I was full of zeal for every moment of my life for righteousness, it would in the end be insufficient.

[7 : 26] But the good news of the Christian gospel, as Paul has been explaining it throughout this letter to the Romans, is that rather than seek to attain our own righteousness, God provides it for us in Christ.

The Old Testament law itself was not there so that the ancient Israelites could attain their own righteousness, but rather it ultimately pointed to its goal which was Jesus, God's gift of righteousness for us.

Jesus is the goal of the law of the Old Testament. He's the one to whom it drives and points and directs because God in the end provides righteousness because the problem with the Old Testament law is not it but us and we're not good enough to keep it and thus we fail to make the finishing line of righteousness.

Now of course that doesn't apply just to ancient Israel either. All too often our desire is to achieve, to attain righteousness, to be good people in our own merits.

And what happens with our zeal to become worthy it becomes a pride in ourselves, our spiritual independence and thus at least subconsciously we're saying to God I don't really need Jesus because I'm a pretty good person.

[8 : 48] I'm getting close to the righteousness finishing tape of this race and I don't need Jesus. Thank you very much all the same. Now probably we don't ever dare say it in those words but for many people that is how they live their lives.

Attaining their own righteousness and thus and inevitably ignoring the gift of righteousness. For who wants to be given something when they're trying to do it themselves?

And so all too often people turn their backs on Jesus God's gift of righteousness. Now it's true that the Old Testament taught that by keeping the law of the Old Testament there would be righteousness.

Paul goes on to talk about that in this passage from chapter 10. He says of the Israelites firstly in verse 2 I can testify that they have a zeal for God but it's not enlightened for being ignorant of the

righteousness that comes from God that is Jesus and seeking to establish their own righteousness they've not submitted to God's righteousness.

If you pursue your own you're not looking for and aren't welcoming the righteousness God gives.

For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

[10:11] As I say the law points to Christ he's its goal its end he is the one who provides righteousness. Now then he goes on to quote Moses in two places firstly he quotes Moses concerning the righteousness that comes from the law that the person who does these things will live by them a quote from the book of Leviticus it's true the person who does these things will live by them the problem is that even in the context of Leviticus no one can keep them because no one's good enough the Israelites had got it wrong they pursued the law thinking that by keeping the law they would attain righteousness if they could do it they would have but they couldn't and they didn't so Paul goes on to quote Moses showing the right context of those verses although he quotes from Deuteronomy that is the law in the Old Testament would never procure righteousness for a person because we fail but the law points to the righteousness that comes from God so he quotes from the end of Moses' own days Deuteronomy 30 when he says the righteousness that comes from faith says do not say in your heart who will ascend to heaven that is to bring

Christ down or who will descend into the abyss that is to bring Christ up from the dead that is you don't have to go to heaven or you don't have to plumb the depths of the abyss to find righteousness because it's come to you in Jesus he's been born he's come from heaven he's lived he's gone through death and he's risen from the dead back to heaven righteousness has come to you in Jesus Christ and the Old Testament law was anticipating that it was looking forward to it you don't have to attain it you don't have to scale the heights or plumb the depths of this world or creation to find righteousness by your own effort or energy but God has brought it to you in Jesus Christ and so he goes on to quote Moses in verse 8 but what does it say the word is near you on your lips and in your heart in the Old Testament the word of God the law of God was written on two tablets of stone for the Ten Commandments and then on other papyrus scrolls or whatever for the rest of the Old Testament law despite its zeal

Israel could not attain that law it could not attain righteousness it could not keep it but the law itself in the Old Testament looked forward to a time when it would not just be written on tablets of stone or papyrus scrolls but would be written by God on the hearts of God's people for the Old Testament knew that people were not good enough to keep God's word and God's law so it knew that God needed to do a work on the heart of people in order for the law of God to be kept and righteousness to be received not attained so even as early as Deuteronomy 30 Moses in the context of Deuteronomy 30 is saying God will change your hearts so then the word will be near you it will be on your lips and in your heart it won't just be out there on tablets of stone or in scrolls but in Deuteronomy 30 Moses anticipates that the people will fail they'll be kicked out of the land as punishment and then in an act of grace

God will bring them back to the land and subsequent to that will change their hearts so that the word of God his law will now be on their lips and in their hearts so that they can do it that's what the Old Testament is looking forward to so rightly understanding the Old Testament Paul is saying here will mean that you don't try to get your own righteousness by keeping the law because you can't but the right understanding of the Old Testament is that you have faith in God who will change your heart at some point and enable you then to receive his own righteousness so then in summary of that how is a person a Christian how is a person saved Paul says it very simply in verse 9 words that we do well even to remember 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 two things together both essential confessing with your lips that Jesus is Lord believing in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead now that's not a magical formula there it's not as though somehow all we've got to say is Jesus is Lord and somehow believe that just God raised Jesus from the dead and that's it God knows what we're like and believing or trusting that God raised Jesus from the dead picks up all Paul has been saying earlier in this letter about why Jesus died in the first place and why God raised him from the dead so that our sins would be forgiven and confessing that Jesus is Lord is confessing that he is in charge he is sovereign indeed confessing that he is God for the word Lord frequently through the Old Testament and that's the context that Paul is using it here points to God and Paul is saying that Jesus in fact is divine our God now he uses the expressions confessing with your lips because he's picking up the language from Deuteronomy in the previous verse the

word is near you on your lips so you can confess Jesus is Lord and it's in your heart so that you can believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and then in verse 10 he repeats it in effect for emphasis so important is this for one believes with the heart and so is justified that is declared righteous sins forgiven and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved he's not talking about two groups of people as though oh well it's alright for some people to confess with their lips and others to believe in their heart it's the one group of people as the previous verse makes clear he then goes on to make it clear that this way of salvation is for both

[16:16] Jew and non-Jew and this is crucial to his argument though in a sense he's anticipated this throughout this letter already he says in verse 11 the scripture says no one who believes in him will be put to shame in fact literally it says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame that is anticipating the final day of judgment when we face the judgment throne of Christ we will not be put to shame and cast into punishment or judgment or hell but if we in fact believe in him Jesus will be raised up to eternal life then for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek that is a way of saying Jew and non-Jew for any person in effect the same Lord Jesus is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him notice that he's generous that is when we call on him it's not our right that God saves us but when we call on God he is generous to give us mercy and save us for as Paul says in verse 13 everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved this applies to every person of whatever socio-economic background whatever ethnic background whatever religious background whoever they are in whatever age they live everyone without exception who calls on the name of the Lord

Jesus will be saved that is a statement of dependence not independence for the person who is fiercely independent spiritually will never call on the name of the Lord Jesus to be saved because they think they can save themselves by their own attainment of righteousness but Paul says no that's not the way for no one can do that but rather if you call on the name of the Lord Jesus righteousness will be given to you God's own righteousness being saved is talking again about that final day of judgment that we will be saved from the final wrath of God and put into hell and judgment and punishment and so on Paul's words here are I think clear enough to say that there is no other way of salvation there is no other name which we can call upon to be saved there is no other faith that we can have by which we'll find salvation and there is no other righteousness that we will ever attain or receive other than the righteousness given to us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ how will a Jew be saved through faith in Jesus how will a non-Jew be saved through faith in Jesus and these words are so important because there are so many false heresies around these days so many people say that everyone's going to be saved I mean God is full of mercy he's going to lead everyone into heaven no Paul says everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved he doesn't say everyone shall be saved in verse 13 but everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved there are some who say well all these religions they're all the same they all believe in the same God if you're a Buddhist or a Muslim or a Confucian or a Hindu well they're gods they'll bring you to salvation wrong Paul says salvation comes only through Jesus Christ not through any other religion or faith or belief there are some who say that Jews will be saved as a separate category because they're God's Old Testament people and other people Christians of any nation they'll be saved through Jesus wrong Paul makes it very clear here that if any Jews are saved and not all will be they will be saved through faith in the Messiah Jesus Christ no other way and there are plenty of people in a materialistic society like ours especially who think that through their own good works they will be saved or save themselves wrong Paul says you'll never be good enough submit to the righteousness of God receive the righteousness that comes from Jesus and stop trying to attain your own Charles Wesley expresses that in a couple of his hymns Jesus your blood and righteousness are my beauty my glorious dress that is in heaven the righteousness with which we shall be clothed is not our own but is the righteousness of Jesus clothed in righteousness divine bold I approach the eternal throne that is not clothed in my own righteousness do I approach

God's throne but clothed in the righteousness given to me through Jesus then with boldness we can approach God's throne now the whole issue here for Paul has been the issue of the fact that Israelites are not saved they're not Christians in his day by and large and he's perplexed by that why aren't they saved he goes through this sequence of how a person comes to be saved if a person's the name of the lord articles they need to believe in the name of the lord in order to believe in the name of the lord they need to have heard of the name of the lord and if they're going to hear

of the name of the lord then somebody needs to tell them of the name of the lord then somebody needs to be sent by God to do that so that's what Paul says in verses 14 and 15 how are they to call on one in whom they've 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 and how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent by God that is now the issue for Paul about the Israelites is not that they haven't heard they have he goes on to say in verses 16 and 17 but not all have obeyed the good news whereas Isaiah says Lord who's believed our message so faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes through the word of Christ the issue is that they haven't obeyed the word they haven't believed it that is they haven't exercised the obedience of faith to use the expression from chapter 1

[22 : 58] Paul elaborates on that by quoting the Old Testament itself to show this is exactly what God predicted would happen and indeed the Israelites ought to have understood this but I ask have they not heard indeed they have verse 18 their voice has gone out to all the earth and their words to the end of the world quoting from Psalm 19 they have heard well then have they not understood well yes Paul now quotes two places Moses and Isaiah the law and the prophets putting the whole of the Old Testament together Moses quotes quote is from Deuteronomy 32 again a context which anticipates the rebellion and sin of the people of God Israel I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation with a foolish nation I'll make you angry that is predicting the inclusion of people who are not Jews into the people of God that will actually make the Jews angry that that has happened and then he quotes from Isaiah I've been found by those who did not seek me I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me

Paul is saying here that exactly the situation of his day is what the Old Testament anticipates the Israelite people would not believe they would reject the word the inclusion of the non-Jewish people into the people of God would occur it would make the Jewish people angry Paul himself of course was so angry that he was there approving when Stephen was stoned to death and he finishes the chapter by quoting again from Isaiah and of Israel he says all day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people that is the problem lies with Israel not with God but God has not given up on Israel and that's the issue we're going to see more of next week despite Israel's recalcitrance and rebellion God still like the prodigal son's father has his arms open towards Israel now let me conclude with three points in recent weeks we've seen an emphasis in chapters 8 and 9 on the predestination of God

God who is sovereign in mercy to whomever he wants but sovereign in declining mercy and hardening hearts of whoever he wants but even though God predestines there is still responsibility attached to people the blame for Israel's lack of conversion to Christ is not because God hasn't predestined them Paul doesn't end this chapter saying the problem lies with God because he's not predestined Israel the problem lies with Israel because they are rebellious against God and indeed the doctrine of predestination does not in any way compromise the need to pray the beginning of this chapter Paul prays the beginning of chapter 9 he's full of prayer for the Israelites nor does it compromise the need for evangelism because in this chapter there is the need for those to preach because that is how God's predestining mercy is applied to people preachers need to preach people need to pray God's predestination does not disqualify any of that and in fact human responsibility is at the fore in this chapter verse 13 says everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved it doesn't say everyone whom God predestines shall be saved so if you're worried that you're not predestined call on the name of the Lord for if you call on the name of the Lord you can be sure that you're predestined because there's nobody who calls on the name of the Lord who won't be saved and therefore is not predestined so the two things go together though in our minds often we can't see how that happens

God's predestination and sovereignty and our responsibility they fit together they're in harmony with each other we call on the name of the Lord and we're saved God extends mercy to us freely and sovereignly his predestination the second thing is that if somebody is going to be converted to Christ and be a Christian they need to hear the gospel our loving actions are insufficient our work for the poor and the needy is insufficient our being neighborly welcoming is insufficient it might draw people somehow into a Christian fellowship it might make people inquire about why we do what we do but unless they hear the gospel preached or spoken to them then they will not be converted to Christian faith so the obligation lies not just on preachers like me in a pulpit but on each one of us one to one with our family friends and neighbors to share the gospel that righteousness is a gift

from God through faith in Jesus alone and not something we can ever attain if you call on the name of the Lord you will be saved and the final point to conclude is that salvation is so easy the bar of righteousness is too high for us but ironically salvation is so easy believe and confess can it be simpler that Jesus is Lord and believe that God has raised him from the dead see salvation rests on what God has done not us and therefore it is so easy but we'll only receive God's righteousness when we renounce our claims on our own

I've often met people who in older age become Christians often for most of their life they've been good and kind and loving people though not always and for some of them they've been churchgoers for much of their life though not always but for those who've been good and nice people and churchgoers for many years who suddenly become a Christian what happens is that suddenly the gospel clicks in their mind and they realise that salvation is not by their own goodness or godliness or church going or piety or love or whatever their own attempt at righteousness but the salvation comes through the gift of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus and so they renounce the claim on their own righteousness and submit to God's let's pray our heavenly father we pray for those whom we know who are not saved friends family neighbours acquaintances colleagues loved ones help us to share the gospel so that they may hear and work in their hearts so that they may not only hear but heed and believe and call on the name of Jesus and thus be saved [30 : 03] Amen