

God's Riches

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: 10 April 2011

Preacher: Rev. Jim Salladin

[0 : 00] Let's try that again. Not there yet.

Oh. Waiting. We good? I think we're good. We sound good. Okay, let's pray. Father, you say that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, and that is a glorious, glorious promise. And we ask that you would move us to call on your name, and that you would move us to call on your name, and that you would respond by saving us.

And right now, we ask that you would open our hearts to your word, that you make it clear to us, that you take away confusion, that you would take away distraction, that we may hear well.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Go ahead and sit down. Hi, everybody. Oh, that's so nice. It's so nice when there's a little bit of back and forth.

[1 : 11] Open up your Bibles to page 946. It may be still open there where Chris read. We're looking at verses 4 through 13 of chapter 10 of Romans.

The passage that we're looking at tonight begins to explain or gives us a little bit of insight about two things in Christianity that are very, very odd.

There are lots of things that are odd about Christianity. If you're new to Christianity, you're probably figuring that out, that there are just a bunch of things that are bizarre, things you just don't expect to be there, and they're there, and things that are hard to understand, and all sorts of things like that. And if you've been a Christian for a long time, I expect you know the same thing. When you've been around the church and around the Bible for a long time, you're continually surprised by all sorts of things that come up that just you wouldn't have expected to find in the scriptures or to find their dynamics within Christianity, all sorts of things like that.

Well, there are lots of odd things, but let me point out two things that are a bit odd. One is that if you look down through the history of Christianity, one of the odd things about Christianity, one of the unique things about Christianity, is it has a remarkable ability to take deep root in wildly different cultures.

[2 : 44] I don't know if you've thought much about that. I mean, there are lots of different world religions, and all of them have, in one way or the other, spread around the globe. But for the most part, I want to say this advisedly, but for the most part, the religions of the world, each of them, have some sort of cultural home that usually stays in the same place.

So Judaism, for instance. Judaism is practiced all over the world, but it is always tied culturally, obviously, to ethnic Jews and geographically, in one way or another, eventually tied to Jerusalem and to Israel.

Islam is the second biggest world religion. It's all over the world. And yet, at the same time, it is tied linguistically to Arabic because you can't translate the Koran and have it remain, properly speaking, the Koran.

And geographically, it's always tied, in one way or another, to Mecca. And you can say the same, very similar thing about Hinduism and most of the other religions of the world. But Christianity is a little bit different.

Because over the course of Christian history, Christianity has had a bunch of different, I don't know, epicenters. I mean, it started in Jerusalem.

[4 : 15] But very soon, it had a kind of, kind of a home base in Antioch in Syria. A little bit later, the kind of cultural epicenter of Christianity was in Constantinople, modern Istanbul, and Turkey.

A little bit later, of course, Rome has been a major epicenter of Christianity. But at different times in church history, Northern Europe has had a kind of, has been the center of vital Christianity.

For a while, North America seemed to be, to play that role. And today, most people would say that the, if there is a cultural epicenter of Christianity, it would be somewhere in Africa, perhaps China,

perhaps South America.

Christianity's cultural epicenter has seemed to shift in different places. And it's an indication that in a way that is not true of very many other religions that I can think of, Christianity has an ability to penetrate very deeply into a culture and be owned in a deep way within the culture.

Now, why is that? Why is that? Now, I'm not going to answer that question entirely. But part of the answer to that question is found in the second odd thing about Christianity.

[5 : 23] Christianity. And that is, one of the unique things about Christianity is that Christianity is fundamentally an inward out religion.

Does that make any sense? As opposed to being an outward in religion. Let me try to explain that. Most religions, in most religions, most religions are outward in religions.

Which mean, what do I mean by that? I mean, the buck stops with behavior at a fundamental level. So, you get your behavior right and the rest will follow.

Somehow, whether it's ceremonial behavior, whether it's moral behavior, whatever the case may be. But Christianity is different on that point. Christianity has always said, no, no, no, no, God is not fundamentally satisfied with mere good behavior.

It's not satisfied with mere outward behavior. God wants your heart. Which means, Christianity has always said, you can behave very, very well.

[6 : 28] But if your heart is not given over to God, it's still no good. It means just no good. And therefore, Christianity has always said, which is a bit odd within the world religion kind of market.

The decisive change happens not first and foremost in your outward behavior. The decisive change has to happen first and foremost on the inside, in the heart. It's an inward and then outward religion rather than an outward and then inward religion.

And that's part of why Christianity is able to go so deeply within the cultures of the world because it goes deeply within the human heart.

And I want to explore tonight, looking at our passage, what this means, what this dynamic is all about that has to do with this inward transformation with an outward expression.

Okay? All right. Let's get into the text. A little bit of review here for those of us who aren't here every week. So we're looking through, obviously, the book of Romans. And we're in Romans chapter 10.

[7 : 35] Romans chapter 10 is part of a section of Romans, which is chapters 9 through 11. If you've been with us for the last few weeks, you'll know that the big question that hangs over Romans chapter 9 through 11 is the question of Israel.

And more specifically, it's this question. Hopefully you remember this from a few weeks ago. Why is it that Israel has rejected the Messiah? Which is a really good question.

If it's true that Jesus really is God's Messiah, predicted and anticipated in the Old Testament, why is it that the Old Testament people of God, Israel, why is it that they have largely not recognized him?

And over the course of the three chapters, 9, 10, 11, Paul gives a few different answers to that question. The answer that he gives in chapter 10 is this. Israel has misunderstood their own scriptures.

Israel has misunderstood the law. They've made a mistake in reading the Bible. And the mistake that Israel made is a mistake that's really easy for any of us to make.

[8 : 44] In fact, if you're a religious person, like a lot of us here, this is one of the easiest mistakes that you can possibly make. So tune in.

If you read through the Old Testament, and particularly if you read through the first five books of the Bible, so Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, those first five books of the Bible written by Moses, we often call them the law or the Torah or the Pentateuch.

If you read through those books of the Bible written by Moses, Moses says a bunch of times something like this. He says something like, if you obey the commandments, you will live.

He says it several different times. Paul actually quotes Moses in verse 5, chapter 10, verse 5. He says, the person who does the commandment...

He says he says, the man is falan. He says, the law or that ■■■elles, the man is falrable, that tortures, and the man, the corrects they say among the following Him.

[9 : 48] I was kind of amist away, and it was técnico-denico. LAUGHTER He says, it's noarto-harder. He s■■h, atunci-a-rappe. See, when I was on Google earth driving by Moses or Leviticus, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 33] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[15 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you.

And particularly, what does he mean by the heart? What does it mean to believe with the heart?

Think about this for a little bit. Whenever the Bible talks about the heart, this is pretty much always the case.

Whenever the Bible talks about the heart, it's talking about the heart. The absolute center of the heart, it's talking about the heart, it's talking about the heart, it's different, right?

The heart, it's talking about the heart, it's acting about the heart, it's trying to matter. It's talking about the heart of the heart in the heart, it's talking about the heart, it's Uhm, it, it's interesting.

Yeah. days after Jesus literally died, God literally and physically brought him back to life, rolled away the stone, and Jesus came out an alive human being and he ascended to the right hand of the Father.

[17 : 37] On the one hand, it means that we believe that that historically happened. But it's not just that. It also means that with all your heart, you entrust yourself to Jesus.

When I got married, I stood up in front of a lot of people and I made promises to Amber, my wife, and she made promises to me and I accepted those promises.

And in that moment, I cognitively understood a lot about who she was and I understood enough to know that it was plausible for me to trust her and more than that, to entrust myself to her.

And I did that with my heart. It's the same thing that happens in the Christian life. When a Christian comes to Jesus, we understand at least a little bit about who he is and the truth about who he is, but then there's a moment in which with our heart, we entrust ourselves to him.

Now one of the things that means is that we're placing all our confidence for our final salvation not upon ourselves, but entirely upon him.

[18 : 45] So Israel, one of Israel's mistakes is that they place their confidence in their own performance. Christians, by definition, are people who place all their confidence in Jesus' performance.

And the crucial sign that God is working in your heart is when at a fundamental level you stop trusting in yourself. You stop trusting in your performance.

You stop building up a case in your mind for how God should accept you because you've done so many good things or you've not done so many bad things or whatever else.

You stop doing that and you completely empty, come before the Lord and trust Jesus exclusively as the one to save you.

Okay, that's the beginning of the inward work. But then there's an outward expression, right? And the outward expression according to 9 and 10 is that we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord. What does that mean?

[19 : 51] In the Roman Empire, all the people of the Roman Empire were forced, oftentimes, to confess Caesar is Lord. And when they confessed Caesar is Lord, what they meant is that they were affirming the idea that Caesar had absolute sovereign power over the entire Roman Empire.

And actually, I think implicitly in their thinking over the entire world. Christians, notoriously, did not do that. In fact, a lot of them died because they didn't confess Caesar is Lord.

Instead, they confessed Christ is Lord. But they meant exactly the same thing. What they meant was when you confess Jesus Christ is Lord, what you're saying is that you're submitting to Jesus as the absolute, uncontested, sovereign master of your life.

And this, friends, is when Christian obedience comes in. Remember, Christianity is not an outward in religion, it's an inward out religion. But when we place our faith truly in Jesus, inwardly, that inevitably leads to an outward expression.

That outward expression of Jesus is Lord which leads inevitably to obedience. Christianity never starts with obedience but it always ends in obedience.

[21 : 16] So Moses was right in verse 5. Those who do the commandments will live. But we always do the commandments. We obey Christ as Lord not as a way to get favor with God but as an expression and a response when we have received his great mercy.

It's always inward first and then outward. Now, when you confess Jesus Christ as Lord that doesn't mean that you live perfectly and you never sin again or anything like that.

But it does mean this and we should all be very sober and think about this very carefully. It does mean that when God has truly changed the heart when we confess Jesus Christ as Lord it means that we are absolutely waging war against every fiber of our being that is not submitted to Jesus Christ.

It means every part of us that is still rebelling against Jesus we are waging war against that and we are mortifying. Mortifying is an old word it means we are executing every part of our heart that is still given over to sin.

And that is why Christianity the Christian life is always a fight it is always a war. Now ask yourself this have you trusted in Christ?

[22 : 44] Have you trusted in him and not yourself? Have you responded to receiving his mercy by constant warfare against all known sin? And if that doesn't describe you you need to ask yourself the question are you a Christian?

It is very important to ask yourself that question don't assume it. Okay let me close with two implications. If all this is true it means on the one hand that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

That is what it says in verse 13. But it means on the other hand that only those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. Let me take these in turn.

One of the reasons I said at the beginning one of the strange things about Christianity is that Christianity has had the ability to penetrate very deeply into wildly different cultures. One of the reasons for that is that Christianity has taken deep root in cultures because fundamentally Jesus is able to take deep roots in the hearts of human beings.

And that means that true Christianity isn't fundamentally an imposition of something foreign upon the individual or upon the society or upon the culture. It means that true Christianity is when Jesus goes into the core of our being and transforms us from the inside out.

[24 : 12] And that means as different as human beings are, as different as we are around this world, the different cultures, the different personalities, all those things, as different as we are, this is relevant to all of us because all of us have deep down the same problem.

we all need our hearts changed by Jesus. And this passage tells us that the Lord of all desires to bestow his wealth richly on everybody who calls upon him.

Every last person. And for the last 2,000 years, ever since this was penned, ever since Jesus came, Jesus has been responding to every person in every culture who's ever called out upon him in faith. And in every situation, anybody who has ever called upon the name of the Lord, Jesus has responded by changing their hearts, by giving them faith, and by bringing them to a place where they truly confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

And so right now, if you think that you're not, that Jesus couldn't save you, or if you think that Jesus couldn't save this city, or if you think that Jesus couldn't save your family or your friends or the people that you know, or if you've given up hope on somebody around you, you need to know, based upon this text, that you are utterly wrong.

[25 : 28] That Jesus desires to bestow wealth on everyone who will call. So if that's you, call, call upon the name of the Lord. This is why the gospel is deeply and ultimately relevant for the whole world and for every single individual.

But then there's a flip side to it. The flip side is that only those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And this is where I want to address for a minute those of us who are really, really good.

A lot of us here are really skilled at being religious and good. Like, you've been practicing all your life. You know what I mean? And there are a lot of us here who are very skilled at Christianity, skilled at church.

You know, I mean, a lot of us know how to, are very skilled at being, at looking put together and we always know what the other person wants us to say and we're able to come up with it really, really well.

We're skilled at doing the right thing, saying the right thing, being in home group and articulating just the right thing that's going to make everybody think well of us. A lot of us here, you could be absolutely admired by people, right?

[26 : 43] You might be a home group leader. I don't know. And yet, you need to remember, as good as you are, as religious as you are, you need to keep in mind Israel's temptation.

Israel was really skilled at religion. I mean, nobody's better at it than they were. And yet, they were so skilled at it, they were so good at being good, that they missed, they forgot their need and they missed God's solution to their deepest need.

And that can happen to us just as easily as it happened to them. I mean, you can be so skilled in outward performance that you fool yourself into thinking that you can trust yourself. And if you're trusting yourself, then you're not trusting Jesus.

And if you're not trusting Jesus, you're not calling upon him for salvation. And if you're not calling upon him for salvation, you will not be saved, no matter how good you are. No matter how good you are. You see, you know, hell is filled with people who think they're good.

And heaven is only filled with people who know they're not and called on the name of the Lord. And so the question for us as we end is simply this.

[28 : 01] Jesus wants to come and transform you from the inside out. Has that happened? Have you placed your faith exclusively in him? Have you renounced every shred of trusting in your own self and in your performance?

Have you knelt before him and said, Jesus Christ, you are my Lord and I will be ruthless with everything that does not submit to you in my life. And if that's not you, call upon him now and ask him for the mercy and for the grace to do that.

Ask him for the faith you don't have. Tell him, I can't imagine saying that but I want to. He'll do it. Read Psalm 130 that we read earlier.

Let that be your prayer. Pray it every single day. Tell God, I'm watching for you more than the watchmen wait for the morning. And as you do that, he will respond because he is waiting.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of the entire universe, is waiting, waiting, desiring to pour out his wealth upon you. Waiting for you to call upon him.

[29 : 14] And right now, even the reason you're here is he is beckoning you and provoking you to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. So do it. Amen.

Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen.