

# “JESUS IS LORD”

Romans 9:30-10:21

Key Verse: 10:9

**“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”**

In chapter 9 Paul explained that God exercises his sovereign choice out of his mercy. As the Creator, God is free to do whatever he wants to do. Yet he does not exercise his power randomly or capriciously. Rather, he does so through his tender mercy. When we realize this, we are sure that God is good, and he always works for good. We can accept his sovereign choice with thanksgiving. In chapter 10, Paul shows us how God’s sovereign choice and mercy have worked out in gospel history. Out of his great mercy, God provided the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. All those, and only those, who believe in Jesus are saved. The Jews did not accept God’s message. They tried to establish their own righteousness through the works of the law. This legalism was deeply rooted in their culture. It caused them to reject God’s way. In our culture, the ideals of freedom and independence are valued. We naturally develop as individuals who live in our own way. This mindset can hinder us from accepting God’s way of salvation. Even after believing in Jesus, we may revert back to our own way of living. However, if Jesus is Lord, we need to submit to him and follow his way. Let’s think about what it means to us that Jesus is Lord.

**First, Christ is the culmination of the law (9:30-10:4).** In 9:24 Paul declares that God called not only Jews, but also Gentiles according to his sovereign mercy. This was a surprising revelation to the Jews. But it was God’s plan in the Scriptures. Paul quoted the prophets Hosea and Isaiah. They foretold that the Gentiles would accept the gospel, and the Jews reject it - except for a remnant (25-29). Their prophecies were fulfilled (30-31). The Gentiles obtained God’s righteousness, while the Jews did not. Here Paul contrasts the two ways of obtaining God’s righteousness: by faith or by works. In other words, by grace alone or by human effort. When it is obtained by grace, there is nothing to boast of. Rather, it produces humble thanksgiving. If it is obtained by works, people become self-righteous, proud and unthankful.

In verse 32 Paul explains why the Jews failed to obtain God’s righteousness. It is because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. No one can obtain God’s righteousness by works. Though one keeps the

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law 99%, and breaks just one law, they become a lawbreaker. In law there is no mercy, but only justice. If God exercised his sovereign power with justice alone, no one would survive. But God had mercy on mankind and sent Jesus into the world as our Savior. When Jesus came, he demonstrated God’s mercy by healing the sick, having fellowship with sinners and forgiving them. The Pharisees were very upset about this and began to criticize him. Then Jesus said, **“But go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners”** (Mt 9:13). The Jews should have accepted God’s way of salvation through Jesus. But they did not. They insisted on their own way. As a result, they stumbled over the stumbling stone (32b). This also fulfilled God’s prophecy. As it is written: **“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame”** (33). Here, the stone and the rock refer to Jesus. To those who reject him, he is the stumbling stone. But to those who accept him, he is the cornerstone. Those who trust in him will never be put to shame. How each of us responds to Jesus is vitally important. It is a matter of eternal glory or eternal destruction.

In 10:1-4, Paul explains the reason why Israel stumbled. This was not just a theological issue for Paul, but something he felt passionately about. So he said, **“...my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved”** (1). As a former Pharisee, he understood them, and his heart was broken for them. He could testify about them that they were zealous for God. This was their great point. They were not consumed by mundane things, or material pursuits, but they had a driving passion for God. They were meticulous in their study of the law and tried hard to live according to it. They kept the Sabbath day holy, observed all the religious festivals, kept the dietary laws, gave tithes regularly, and offered so many sacrifices to worship God. Their enemies attacked them on the Sabbath day, knowing that they would never violate the Sabbath law. In a word, they were crazy for God - not for money or pleasure or political power, but for God. There is no other such nation like this in world history.

However, the problem was that their zeal for God was not based on knowledge. Here the word “knowledge” refers to definite and full knowledge. Of course, they had some knowledge of God, but it was partial and shallow. They knew the contents of the Law, but they did not understand why the Law was given to them. The purpose of the Law was to help them recognize sin as sin and come to Jesus for salvation (Ro 3:20-21; Gal 3:24). But they refused to

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come to Jesus and missed the point (Jn 5:39-40). Zeal is good; but zeal without knowledge is not good (Pr 19:2a). Zeal without knowledge, commitment without reflection, or enthusiasm without understanding is fanaticism. Such fanaticism is the basis of many cult groups throughout history. It was such fanaticism that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. St. Augustine said, “It is better to go on the right way limping than to run speedily out of the way.”

Paul explained the consequences of Israel’s misguided zeal in verse 3: **“Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”** How can we submit to God’s righteousness? John Calvin said, “The first step to obtaining the righteousness of God is to renounce our own righteousness.”<sup>1</sup> This was hard for the Israelites, because their own righteousness seemed so good. But it was absolutely necessary to obtain the righteousness of God. What about us? We can become self-righteous based on our hard work for God, or our faithfulness to his ministry. That makes serving the Lord feel like a burden, and we actually become a burden to his work. Or we can be self-righteous based on our deeply held values, such as having a good work ethic, showing respect to elders, being environmentally conscious to recycle, or being keenly aware of our emotions. These good practices may blind us to sins that need to be repented, or they may make us judgmental and critical toward others. We need to ask ourselves, “Do I realize that my own righteousness is like filthy rags? Do I renounce my righteousness to obtain God’s righteousness?”

Paul understood what the Israelites needed - it was to change their perspective about the Law. They needed to understand that the Law points to Christ (Lk 24:44). Paul said, **“Christ is the culmination of the law...”** (4a). In the ESV, the word “culmination” is translated “end.” It is from the Greek word “*telos*.” It means “goal” or “completion,” indicating that the law pointed to Christ and he has fulfilled it. He did so by keeping its requirements perfectly and by offering himself as the perfect sacrifice for sinners. Another meaning of “end” or “culmination” is the termination of the law. This means the end of the law’s reign as our master. We have been released from the law and Jesus is our new master. Verse 4b says, **“...so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”** When we believe in Jesus, his righteousness is imputed to us. We can do nothing to earn his righteousness. We can only receive it passively. We have no reason to become proud. We should be humble and

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, John, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (1540; Oliver Boyd, 1961), p.221.

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thankful always. This is God’s way of righteousness. In the next section we learn how God activates his righteousness in people.

**Second, the message of salvation through Christ (10:5-21).** To clarify God’s gracious offer of salvation, Paul again contrasts works and faith (5-8). Then, he sets forth the contents of the gospel (9-13), and God’s method of spreading the gospel (14-15). Finally, he explained Israel’s rejection of the gospel and God’s long-suffering patience toward them (16-21).

In verses 5-8 we again see the contrast of two ways of righteousness. One is by keeping the law. To explain this, Paul quoted Leviticus 18:5: **“The person who does these things will live by them”** (5). The problem is that no one can keep the demands of the law because we are totally depraved by the power of sin (Gal 3:10). The other way of righteousness is by faith. To explain this, Paul quoted from Deuteronomy 30:12-14. These words were originally spoken by Moses to encourage the Israelites to keep the law, indicating that it was not too hard for them. Paul modifies Moses’ words to include the gospel. He said: **“Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what does it say? ‘The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,’ that is, the message of faith that we proclaim....”** Paul’s point is that the righteousness that comes by faith does not include any human effort. In order to be saved, we don’t need to perform some kind of miraculous achievement, such as ascending into heaven or descending into the deep. If we depend on such things, we discount what Christ has done for us.

Christ came into the world and died for our sins, paying the full price. He said, **“It is finished”** (Jn 19:30). Then he rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he is seated at the right hand of God. Christ did all this for our salvation. Now all we need to do is to accept what Christ has done with faith. It is simple enough for anyone to understand. Still, the fact that it is given so freely and attained so simply can be hard to accept. How can we accept this? As we have already seen, we need to renounce our own righteousness. Then we need to cry out to Jesus. There was a young man who grew up in an unbelieving family. He lived as he pleased and indulged in all the pleasures of the flesh. He spent several months traveling Europe, living at random, indulging in drugs, alcohol and sexual immorality. One night, as he lay on his bed, he had a dream. He felt the devil taking his bed and pulling him rapidly downward into a bottomless pit. He was horrified and felt he was going to hell forever. But

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somehow, he cried out, “Jesus!” At that moment, his dream ended. When he woke up, he felt different. He no longer desired the pleasures of sin, but the holiness of God. He studied hard and became an excellent Bible teacher and theologian. His name is Joseph Murphy, one of my theology professors. This is just one of many stories that testify we can enter God’s kingdom simply by faith in Jesus.

Now Paul tells us what we need to believe specifically to be saved. Let’s read verses 9-10: **“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”** To **“declare”** means to make a public confession of allegiance. This was not easy for the Romans. In their society Caesar was the Lord. Anyone who did not confess Caesar as Lord would be persecuted. This is why many Christians were martyred. This confession is not just lip service. It is the acceptance of Jesus as the absolute sovereign of my life. It comes from faith in one’s heart. The content of this faith is that Jesus who died for our sins rose again and lives forever as our Lord. Jesus is not a dead Lord, but the living Lord! When we believe in Jesus from our hearts, we are justified - our sins are forgiven and we can have fellowship with God. We are saved from the power of sin and death and receive eternal life and God’s everlasting kingdom. Jesus rules our hearts with peace and love and joy and fills us with the Holy Spirit.

This confession of faith has a tremendous impact on our lives. It is not a small matter or a minor adjustment but a transformation. Our life purpose and value system change from self-centered to Christ-centered, from self-glory seeking to Christ-honoring. Paul testified, **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”** (Gal 2:20). Now we belong to Christ. We should live for Jesus every day in all that we do. Paul said, **“If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord”** (Ro 14:8). We should reveal Christ and exalt him in every sphere of life. Jesus is the Lord of my life, family, community, nation and the world. Especially as we begin a new school year, let’s confess Jesus is King of the campus!

How can we reveal Jesus Lordship? There are many ways. Since Jesus is our living Lord, who rose from the dead, we can live without fear. This makes

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our lives very different than others. When St. Paul was in a terrible storm at sea all other passengers had given up hope and were already like dead men. But Paul was different. He could stand up, share words of encouragement and eat something. This inspired all others to do the same. They were all saved. More than that, they could see that Jesus is Lord through Paul. When conflict arise in the body of Christ, it is easy to get upset and blame others. But as Christians, we should remember that Jesus is Lord and he wants us to love one another. We should take the initiative to say, **“I am sorry...forgive me..pray for me...I need you...I love you.”** Then we can give a good influence to others and people can sense the fragrance of Christ in us. These are examples of how we can confess **“Jesus is Lord”** practically.

To support the gospel truth, Paul quoted Isaiah 28:16: **“Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame”** (11). Just as all who sin will be judged, so all who believe in Jesus will be saved and richly blessed. God is impartial in saving people. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. We all believe in the same Lord who richly blesses all who call on him. Paul further quoted Joel 2:32: **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** As we call on the same Lord we find the basis for genuine unity no matter what cultural, generational or national differences we may have. We tend to ask God to bless me, only me. But God is so generous and kind that he richly blesses all who call on him, not just a few special people.

In verses 14-15, Paul asked many “how can” questions. Through these questions, he wanted to reveal how God exercises his sovereign choice and mercy in his salvation work. He mentions five stages that lead to salvation: “call on,” “believe,” “hear,” “preach,” and “sent.” Paul works his way backward from the moment someone confesses to the time a messenger was sent. Chronologically, this process happens in the opposite order. First, someone is sent by God. God initiates his salvation work by sending gospel workers. We call them “missionaries” or “evangelists.” God could save people all by himself. But he has chosen to call and send people to share his mission by preaching the gospel to others. Preaching the gospel, sharing the good news, is the most beautiful thing in the world. It is because it is life- saving work. So Isaiah foretold, **“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”** Feet are not necessarily beautiful. But when they carry a gospel worker they become beautiful. As the good news is preached, people hear it. As they hear it, something happens in their hearts; they believe by the work of the Holy Spirit. Then they call on the name of the Lord and are saved. Here we learn the

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importance of sending missionaries. We believe that God is sending Philmar Mendoza to the Marshall Islands as a missionary. Let's pray for her to preach the good news among 50,000 Marshallese people. May God send many more missionaries to the whole world.

Though the gospel was preached to the Israelites, not many believed (16). Why not? Was something wrong with the gospel message or God's way of working? No. God is pleased through the foolishness of what is preached to save those who believe (1Co 1:21). Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ - the gospel (17). The problem was that Israel rejected the gospel deliberately (18-21). Still, God has a broken heart toward them. He does not give up. He waits for them to repent like the father in the parable of the prodigal son.

God works through the gospel workers whom he chooses and sends. God is pleased to save people through the preaching of the gospel. The core of the gospel is: **“Jesus is Lord.”** Let's preach this gospel on all our campuses, in our workplaces, and in our homes.