



Sermon: Sunday, March 16, 2025 “Faith and Confession”

SCRIPTURE: Romans 10:8-13 ¹⁰ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim), ⁹ because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For one believes with the heart, leading to righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, leading to salvation. ¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹² 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. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Introduction: Legalistic faith and self-righteousness

Paul wrote a letter to Roman Christians from Corinth, Greece, in early 56 AD. At that time, the Roman Church was a community of Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul thought that missionary work in Türkiye and Greece had been accomplished to some extent. He wanted to stop in Rome and then go to Spain to preach the gospel. Before going to Rome, Paul had to accurately convey the core of the gospel. So he wrote Romans.

Romans consists of 16 chapters in total. Among them, chapters 9-11 are about the Israelites. Paul desperately wanted his people Israel to be saved. (Romans 10:1). However, although the Israelites had faithfulness and passion for God, they did not have correct knowledge of God. Paul thought that the Israelites were trying to establish ‘their own righteousness’ and were ignoring ‘God’s righteousness.’ The ‘self-righteousness’ that Paul speaks of here refers to legalistic faith.

In Romans 10:5, Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5, **“Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that ‘the person who does these things will live by them.’”** This verse is a core concept of legalistic faith. As in this verse, if the Israelites can keep the law perfectly, they can become righteous. However, it was impossible for the Israelites to keep all the laws perfectly in their lives. It is impossible for us to keep every law literally.

Jesus said that if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well, and that if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:39) Also, Jesus told us not to forgive only seven times, but to forgive seventy-seven times. (Matthew 18:21-22). But we cannot live by literally keeping these words of Jesus. The reason Jesus said these words is because he wanted us to establish the foundation of the law (love) rather than just living a life of literally keeping the law.

If we misunderstand Jesus’ teaching to establish the foundation of the law and strive to keep the law literally, our lives will be filled with hypocrisy. Additionally, we may become obsessed with the idea that we are morally superior to others. This attitude of life is the ‘self-righteousness’ that Paul speaks of today in Romans 10:3.

However, this concept of self-righteousness has taken root in our daily lives. We live our lives worrying about not being recognized. If we only focus on being recognized by others, we will miss out on what is important and essential. Paul called the essential thing we must not lose sight of as ‘the righteousness of God.’



Body: God's righteousness

The 'righteousness of God' that Paul speaks of is opposed to 'self-righteousness.' 'Self-righteousness' is centered on self, and 'God's righteousness' is centered on God's power. In Paul's view, if a person is caught up in self-righteousness, he or she cannot escape anxiety. This is because humans, as created beings, are not righteous in nature. So, in Romans 10:4, Paul said that Christ is the end of the law for those who believe in the righteousness of God. That means that the law was fulfilled in Christ.

So, Paul presents not the path of the law but a completely new path of faith. Romans 10:9-10 said, **'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. (v.9) For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. (v.10)'**

According to this verse, we are saved if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead. This means that we believe in and acknowledge Jesus through our whole person and being. But was Paul's claim accepted by the Israelites? Of course not. If Paul's argument had been accepted by the Israelites, Christians would not have been kicked out of Israel's synagogues.

At that time, the Israelites thought that believing in God and being recognized as righteous had to be expressed through the law. This makes sense. Many Christians today are not satisfied with just believing in Jesus. In addition to believing in Jesus, we believe that wealth, beauty, health, character, and culture should be present in our lives.

Because Paul was also facing reality, he did not completely deny the legal life of the Israelites. However, he clearly knew that the law had no saving power. In verse 9 of today's text, Paul's statement that Jesus is 'the Lord' and that God raised him from the dead means that God the power of creation, justified those who were rejected by the world as unrighteous.

Those who confess this with their mouth and believe in their heart do not worry that they will be abandoned by the world. Also, they are not worried that their life will be ruined due to poverty. Furthermore, they are not anxious about not being able to achieve happy conditions like other people. This is because they know that God recognized as righteous those whom the world rejected as unrighteous.

Early Christians at the time of Paul also experienced the crucified Jesus as a living person, so they were able to resist Judaism and the Roman Empire, which focused on their own righteousness.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

To understand 'self-righteousness' and 'God's righteousness,' let us think that there are people around us who enjoyed all kinds of joy in the past, and conversely, there are people who lived monotonously. Their lives may feel very different at the time, but as time passes, there is no significant difference. So Ecclesiastes 1:2 confesses: **'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.'** Also, Ecclesiastes 2:1 said, **"I thought in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good' But that also proved to be meaningless."** In fact, people who have had a lot to enjoy in life experience deeper despair before of death.

However, Christians are people who believe in God's righteousness rather than their own righteousness. That is why Paul cried out, **'For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.'** (Romans 10:10).

However, it is difficult to understand these words of Paul. Because many people today are accustomed to a legalistic way of life. The law evaluates a person by his accomplishments. Modern people want to be recognized by the world, even if it means being a hypocrite. This is because they think that if they are not recognized, they will become failures in life. This is the reality we live in. How do we get out of this and live a real life?



Conclusion: By faith alone

To this question, I will answer **'only by faith.'** In other words, as the Bible says today's text, the best way is to go into the depth of the gospel to be justified and saved through faith, not the law. We must experience in each of our lives the wonder of salvation wrought by God through Jesus who died on the cross. The more deeply we experience this in our lives, the more we gain the freedom and peace that the Lord pours into our lives.

And to experience this, what we need is **'only faith.'** Only through faith we have a renewed relationship with God, that is, with life. Salvation is given only by grace, not by our work or abilities. I hope that this kind of faith for the Lord will fill you and me. **Amen!**

