



MT. ROSE REFORMED
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Good Confession

Reverend Scott Johnson | May 24, 2026 | Romans 10:5-13

Old Testament Reading

The Old Testament reading is Deuteronomy chapter 30, verses 11 through 14. And this is the infallible and inerrant word of God. For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it. Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.

New Testament Reading

We'll turn now to Romans chapter 10, Romans chapter 10 for our New Testament reading. And this is also our sermon text today. Romans 10 verses five through 13. Romans 10, five through 13. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down, or who will descend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead. 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. 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. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the scripture says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of

all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Confessing Faith

Well, since today we had the privilege and the blessing to witness the baptism of Riley and also to hear her profess her faith in Christ, I thought it would be appropriate for us to take a break from our study of the book of Exodus, which we have been going through, and instead to turn to this passage from Romans, this passage in which the author, the Apostle Paul, he deals with the significance of a person confessing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you know, there are many varieties of faith in this world. There are all kinds of belief systems. There are all kinds of religions that call for faith. Even a worldview or a philosophy that denies the existence of God, that requires a kind of faith as well for somebody to embrace it, to believe it. And of course, there are all sorts of things in this world that we are tempted to put our trust in, to put our hope in. We might look to things such as money, success, a relationship to give us that purpose, that significance, that joy that our hearts desire. And when we put our trust in these kinds of things, when we look to these things and hope in them, we are exercising there too a kind of faith.

And so there are many kinds of faith, but there is only one faith that brings us salvation. There is only one kind of faith by which our sins are forgiven. There is only one faith that brings us eternal life, and that is faith in the person and in the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And this morning, we have heard Riley declare to us that she affirmed those questions that I put to her. She proclaimed before us her faith, her faith for her salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the question I want to ask you is, how about you? Is your faith, is your hope in the Lord Jesus Christ alone? This is a big question. There is nothing less than your eternal destiny. Nothing less than heaven or hell hangs in the balance on this question. Is your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior?

Now, not everyone who says that they believe in Jesus has true saving faith. The faith that brings us salvation, the faith by which our sins are forgiven, is more than merely saying, I am a Christian, or it's more than merely saying, I agree with what the Bible tells us about Jesus. In our passage this morning, the Apostle Paul, he gives us a picture of what true faith looks like, the

faith that unites us to Christ, the faith that brings us salvation. And there are three things true about saving faith that we can draw from this passage.

The Standard of Holiness and the Two Ways of Righteousness

And the first truth about saving faith is that saving faith rests upon the person of Jesus Christ. Saving faith relies upon the person and the work of Jesus Christ. For any of us to entertain the hope of salvation, for any of us to be qualified that we should spend eternity, not in hell, but in heaven with God, one thing is required of us, and that is that we must be righteous, we must be holy. And that's because God is holy. If the Bible tells us anything at all about God, it is that God is righteous, God is holy. Isaiah 6 says, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory.

And at the same time, if the Bible tells us anything about ourselves, it is that we are not holy, we are not righteous. In fact, we are the opposite of righteous. In the eyes of a holy and righteous God, we are unrighteous, we are sinful. Listen to how God in the scriptures, in his word, listen to how he describes the moral character of man. And this applies to all of us. By nature, this is true of all of us by birth.

Romans chapter three, verses 10 through 12. None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. And then Romans 3:23 says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

I think you'll agree with me, this is not a pretty picture. This is a far cry from the way that we like to think about ourselves, the way in which we flatter ourselves. We like to think of ourselves that basically, fundamentally, we are good people. We are decent, we are moral, we are good people. Of course, we'll acknowledge we have our imperfections, we have our faults, we have our little peccadillos. We're not perfect, however, at heart, we are good. That's the way we like to think of ourselves.

But God knows our hearts perfectly. He knows us better than even we know ourselves. His standard is perfection, and He measures us by that standard. And His judgment on us, His assessment, His infallible evaluation of the moral character of our own hearts is that we are not

good. We are not basically good people. Rather, at heart, we are corrupt. We are bent toward evil. We are sinners. We are sinners. And because God is infinitely holy, and because we are by nature unholy, sinful, if we are to be saved, somehow we need to be made righteous. Somehow we need to become what we are not morally and spiritually, we need to become righteous. Because only he who is righteous can live with a righteous and holy God in heaven forever and ever. All who are unrighteous must be cast out from the presence of God and from heaven forever.

In our passage in Romans this morning, the apostle Paul sets before us two potential ways that we can obtain a righteousness by which we can be saved. The first way he calls in verse five, the righteousness that is based on the law. So here's one way for us to obtain that righteousness that we need for salvation. This is a righteousness that comes from our obedience to the commandments of God. In other words, the righteousness that we need in order to be with God in heaven forever for our salvation can be ours if we are successful in doing all the works that God requires of us in his commandments, in his law. So that's one way to acquire righteousness.

The other way to acquire the righteousness that we need to be saved is what Paul calls in verse six, the righteousness based on faith. And this is the righteousness that belongs to the one who has faith in Jesus. In verses five through eight of our passage, Paul wants us to see that both of these ways of obtaining righteousness, first, the righteousness that comes by perfect obedience to the law of God, secondly, the righteousness that comes by faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Paul wants us to see that both these ways of righteousness were presented to the people of God, to the people of Israel in the Old Testament scriptures.

The Impossibility of Law-Based Righteousness

And so in verse five, Paul says this, he says, for Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. What does he mean by the law? The law of God is everything that God requires of us. It includes the 10 commandments and the 10 commandments are a summary of everything that God requires of us in our thoughts, our words and actions, how we are to please God and reflect His perfect righteousness. And God gave a promise that was implied with the law, and not even implied, but also explicit, a promise that if you will just keep all of God's commandments perfectly, if you will keep his law perfectly throughout your life, you will acquire for yourself a righteousness by which

you will attain eternal life. That's what he says in verse five. The person who does the commandments shall live by them, that is, eternally.

Now, because God is perfectly righteous and holy, the standard to his law that he requires of us is nothing less than perfect conformity, flawless obedience, without the slightest deviation whatsoever from the law that he has given to us in the scriptures and the law that he has also revealed to us in our conscience. Unlike many schools and colleges, there is no grade inflation with God. Either you get an A++ because you have kept his commandments perfectly, or you get an F-, because you have broken his commandments, or even because you have broken one of his commandments.

Our confession of faith describes the kind of obedience that is required by the law of God. If you and I are to gain eternal life by keeping God's commandments, this is the kind of obedience that is required. It must be personal, exact, entire, and perpetual. In other words, if it is your hope, if it is your desire to make yourself righteous in the sight of God by keeping his commandments, this is what you must do. From the very moment that you are born until the very moment that you die, you must never break a single commandment of God, not even in thought. You must keep his law perfectly and not even in the slightest way to transgress it or to break it.

So that means that throughout your entire life, you must love God and worship Him and serve Him with all your heart. It means that you must never say anything that is remotely dishonest or untrue. It means that you must never act in a way that is self-centered or selfish. It means that you must never entertain an impure or an unclean thought. It means that you must never say anything or even think anything that is hurtful against another person. And you must keep all of God's commandments in this way with the entirety of your whole being, your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Now, the problem I hope that you'll see as you examine your own heart, I hope that you'll see that this is an impossible standard. That you and I have not kept this standard. We fail to keep it every day. We cannot keep it. It is utterly impossible for us to keep the commandments of God perfectly because of our sin. Because our hearts, as I said, are bent toward evil. We are by nature corrupt. And we do the very opposite of what God commands us to do in his law.

But this was the way to eternal life that foolishly the Jews in Paul's day sought to acquire righteousness for themselves. This is the way they pursued salvation by keeping God's commandments. They thought they could do it. And so in verse three, we didn't read verse

three, but it's right before our passage. Paul says that the Jews were seeking to establish their own righteousness by their obedience to God. And for that reason, as long as they relied upon their own works, their own efforts in keeping God's commandments, because that was impossible, they could not do it, but as long as they thought that they could do it, they were condemned by their sin, they were lost, they were without hope in the world.

And the same thing is true for every single human being, every single person who tries to make himself acceptable to God, who tries to establish his own righteousness, who tries in the sight of God to make himself good enough, moral enough in order to be saved, in order to have the hope to go to heaven. Every person who seeks to establish his righteousness or to seek salvation on the basis of his works is equally lost.

And so what that means is is that if you are hoping that by keeping the Ten Commandments, if you are hoping by keeping the Golden Rule, or by being a good church member, or by living a moral and upright life, if you are hoping that by being a nice person, being a good person, being a decent person, or if you are hoping that at least making sure that my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, if you are hoping that that will be the basis upon which God will accept you as righteous, you are wrong. You are just as lost as the Jews were in Paul's day who were seeking to establish their righteousness on the basis of the law of God. You are, in fact, without hope. You are lost and condemned as a sinner if you are seeking to gain God's pleasure in that way. And so that first way to obtain righteousness, the way of works, of making yourself right before God, this way literally is a dead end. It leads to nothing but eternal death.

The Righteousness Based on Faith

But what about the second way that Paul lays out for us here? The second way that we might be counted righteous before God in His sight? This is what Paul calls in verse six, the righteousness based on faith. And listen to what Paul says about this second way of obtaining righteousness. He says in verses six and seven, but the righteousness based on faith says, do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down, or who will descend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

Paul, I think you recognize that Paul is quoting from that passage from Deuteronomy that I read to you earlier. And the gist of Paul's interpretation of that Old Testament passage is this, that the righteousness that is based on faith completely abandons, completely forgoes any attempt or

any effort to do what only God can do. The righteousness that is based on faith is not gained by some kind of superhuman effort to ascend into heaven or to descend into the abyss. These things represent the futile, the impossible efforts of man to establish a righteousness by his own works.

And what Paul is saying here in this passage is this, that anyone who seeks to save himself in this way, to establish his own righteousness, to make himself fit for heaven, anyone who seeks to do this on the basis of his works, his obedience, his goodness, really he is denying what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. It is the pride of man that seeks to do this, to seek to do what only God has done. We cannot bring Christ down from heaven. Only God can send his Son into the world. We cannot raise Jesus up from the dead. Only God can raise up his Son from the grave.

And so rather than doing anything, the righteousness that is based on faith is ours simply by receiving what Paul calls the word of faith. But what is the word of faith? It is the gospel. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, which God has brought near to us through the preaching of that gospel. And the gospel is the good news that God has done for us in Jesus Christ what we could not do for ourselves. He has accomplished for us salvation. Paul says in verse eight, 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.

And so Paul is saying that the scripture sets before us these two mutually exclusive attempts or ways that we can obtain righteousness before God, one is based on our own works of obedience, the other is based on faith, faith in Jesus Christ. And the question for you and me this morning is this, where is your trust? On what, on whom are you relying for salvation? For the hope that when you die, you will be welcomed into God's heaven. What are you relying upon? What are you trusting in? Are you trying to establish your own righteousness by your efforts, by your goodness? If so, you are relying on the works of the law. Paul says in another place in the scriptures in Galatians chapter three, for all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to do them. But if your trust is in Jesus Christ, if you have forsaken every attempt to establish your own goodness or righteousness before God, if your hope and trust is in Christ and what he has done for you, then you have the true hope of heaven. You have the righteousness that comes by faith.

The Airport Illustration of Saving Faith

And one of the points that I want you to see from what Paul is saying here is this, is that this faith in Christ, this is more than just agreement in the head. This is more than just a consent to what the Bible says, but it is a reliance upon, a resting in, leaning upon a person, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in what He has done for you, for your forgiveness.

The illustration that I'd like to use in the new members class, and most of you have heard this before, so bear with me. Riley's probably heard it three times already by now, but she'll hear it again. But the illustration I'd like to use in our new members class is that, picture yourself at the airport, and this is an illustration of what faith really is, it's more than just agreement with what the scripture says. But you're at the airport, you're waiting at the gate for your airplane. And you can see the airplane at the end of the jetway, it's a massive 747. And I come up to you and I ask you as you're waiting for your flight, I say, do you believe that this gigantic machine, this huge thing, that that can actually safely fly you to your destination? And at that point, I would expect you to say yes, I believe that. After all, you're at the airport, you're at the gate.

But, as far as I know, you haven't really trusted in that plane yet. You haven't really put your faith in that plane until you walk down the jetway, get on the plane, sit down in your seat and buckle up. At that point then, you are truly exercising faith. You are resting in, you are relying upon this plane to take you safely to your destination. And that is the nature of true saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are resting wholly upon Christ and His works and trusting in what He has done for you. You are trusting your eternal destiny to Him. And by trusting in Him, you can know that He will truly, safely bring you to your eternal destination, to glory in heaven forever.

Confessing the Truth About Jesus

And so saving faith first rests upon the person and work of Jesus. Secondly, saving faith confesses the truth about Jesus. Paul says this in verse nine. He says, 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. To confess something is to acknowledge with your words that something is true. And so if a criminal confesses to the police that he truly did rob a bank, that is his confession. He acknowledges verbally that it is true that I committed this crime. Well, Paul is talking about a

different kind of confession, of course. He's talking about what he calls the good confession, the confession concerning Jesus Christ.

And what is it specifically about Jesus that we are to confess in order to be saved? It is the truth that Jesus is Lord. And so to confess that Jesus is Lord means to confess that you believe that the man, Jesus Christ, He is also, at the same time, the incarnate Son of God who came into the world. He is the one who has been resurrected by the power of God, who is seated now at the right hand of God the Father Almighty in heaven, that he has received from the Father all power, all authority, all dominion, and that he is the supreme ruler and king over all things. That is all that is involved in confessing that Jesus is Lord. It is, in fact, to confess that He is God. He is God in the flesh.

In verse 13, Paul says, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The Lord there is referring to Jesus. For everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved. And he's quoting from the Old Testament from the prophet Joel. And in the Old Testament, whenever the word the Lord is used, it's referring, of course, to God. God is the Lord, the Lord is God. And so when Paul says here, whoever calls on the name of the Lord, referring to Jesus, what he's saying is that Jesus himself is the Lord of the Old Testament. He is the God of Israel, the God of creation, who has come in the flesh.

And so to confess that Jesus is Lord is to believe and to confess with your lips the truth about who he is. Not just, certainly not a myth, not just a man who lived a wonderful life in history, not just a man we make much of in Christianity, but truly a man who came from heaven, a man who is God and man at the same time. This is why any teaching that calls itself Christian but denies at the same time the full deity of Jesus, that Jesus is truly God, that is not Christianity. That is a false gospel that leads people not to salvation, but to destruction. And so to believe the Jesus of liberal theology, to believe the Jesus of the Gnostic Gospels, the Jesus of the Jehovah's Witnesses, this is not to confess that Jesus is Lord, this is to deny that Jesus is Lord, and this leads not to salvation, but to destruction. The only confession of Jesus that can save you is a confession that acknowledges that Jesus is true God and true man, that he is Lord.

Believing in the Heart and Public Confession

And this confession is not a confession that is made merely by the lips, but it is a confession that comes from the heart. Paul says in verse nine, if you believe in your heart that God raised

him from the dead, you will be saved. So it's not only to confess that Jesus is Lord, but to believe in the heart that God raised him from the dead. And that's a shorthand way of saying to believe in the heart everything that is true about Jesus and the scriptures. Not only that he was raised from the dead, but that he came into the world, that he lived a life of perfect obedience, that he suffered on the cross that sacrificial death to atone for the sins of all who come to him in faith, that Jesus was raised from the dead. To believe in your heart in his resurrection is to believe everything that is true about Christ, that he is the one whom God has given to us as a sacrifice to atone for our sins, to bear the guilt, to bear the sin that is ours so that we could be free from that judgment forever. And if you believe in your heart that Jesus lived, that he died, that he was raised for you. If you believe in your heart that he came to take away your sin, that he gives you eternal life, then you will be saved. That is the promise that the scriptures make to you, that God makes to you. Paul says in verse 10, for with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

What we saw today is something that's very important. We saw someone whom the Lord has brought to faith in Christ, we saw her confess her faith in Christ, verbally, to acknowledge, to say, to proclaim to us and to God that she believes in Jesus. It's so important to do that. In fact, it's so important that Jesus says, whoever refuses to do that, whoever shrinks back from confessing faith in Jesus before others, Jesus will deny him before his Father in heaven. In Matthew, Jesus says, so everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. And this is why we asked Riley to confess her faith publicly, to acknowledge verbally before us, before the world, that she believes in Jesus Christ, that he is her savior. So it's not enough to believe in Jesus and stop there, but you must confess your faith in Jesus.

Now, it's true, we are saved by faith alone. And so if somebody like Robinson Crusoe on a deserted island where there's no other people, if he comes to faith in Christ, obviously he can't confess it to anybody. He is saved. God can save anyone who may not be able to verbally confess their faith. God can save an unborn child. He can save an infant. He can save someone with a severe mental disability, someone who's nonverbal. God is able to save anyone by the grace of the new birth by the Holy Spirit. But for most of us, we are to confess our faith in Jesus. It's not to remain a private thing, but we publicly acknowledge that he is our Lord and Savior. You see how closely this passage brings together faith in the heart, confession with the mouth. These are the things by which we are saved.

And a word to the younger children in the church. My hope and prayer is that one day, you who are young, who have not yet confessed your faith in Jesus, my hope and prayer is that you will come up and you will do the very thing that Riley did today. That you will acknowledge before us, yes, I believe in Jesus, that He is my Savior. And my prayer is that when you do that, it will be a confession that comes from the heart, that you truly, genuinely believe that Jesus is your Savior. And what a glorious promise Jesus gives to all of us. What a wonderful promise He gives to us. That if you confess your faith before man, He will acknowledge you. He will confess you before his Father in heaven. And so saving faith confesses the truth about Jesus.

Calling Upon the Name of Jesus for All People

Finally, briefly, saving faith calls upon the name of Jesus. One of Paul's concerns in this passage is to show that this way of righteousness, this way of salvation is open to all people. It is open to all people. And of course, the categories he uses are Jew and Gentile. This was the great division between groups of people in that day. There were Jews and then the rest of the world, the Gentiles. But this salvation is for both Jew and for Gentile. And so it is for all kinds of people. Paul says in verse 11, for the scripture says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. Verse 12, for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

And so what a wonderful picture we have here of the incredible goodness, the grace of God, that he is ready to bestow his riches of salvation, of grace to every single person who calls upon him. You know, sometimes people say Christianity is so intolerant, it is so bigoted, that the Christians would claim that only Christians can have the hope of going to heaven. But I say, look at the tolerance of God here. Every single person, if he only comes to faith in Christ, if he only acknowledges the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord, will be saved, regardless of race, regardless of gender, regardless of social background, regardless of social status.

It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what your family history is. It doesn't even matter how many bad things you have done, how greatly you have sinned, how far you have strayed from the Lord. None of that matters, no matter who you are. If you call upon the name of Jesus Christ, you will be saved and God will pour out upon you the infinite riches of his grace and mercy and love. It will be yours forever and ever.

Have you called out to Jesus? Have you called out to Jesus to be your savior? Confess your sin to him. Turn away from your sin. Call out to him as the one who died in your place that you might be forgiven. And you will receive the hope, the gift of everlasting life and know that Jesus answers all who calls to him. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Let's pray.