



Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. 6 But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 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 with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." 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. 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

When was the last time you shared the gospel with another person? When was the last time you proclaimed the gospel? It doesn't have to be from the pulpit, as most of you will never stand in one. It doesn't have to be on a street corner as that is a ridiculously frightening idea-even for me. Most proclamation of the gospel takes place over the back fence with a neighbor, at lunch time with a co-worker at the office or over a cup of coffee with a friend.

Notice what I didn't ask you. I didn't ask you when was the last time you led someone to faith in Christ? That would be an even more intimidating question, wouldn't it? And I don't even think it is the right question to ask. God does not measure us on how many notches of saved souls we have carved into our leather Bible covers. Besides, saving people is his job. Have you got that straight in your mind? Saving people is God's job, not ours. I know we know this in our heads, but when we proclaim the gospel, we act as if it depends on us.

On our most recent trip to Ohio we finally bought one of those EZ-Pass things which allow us to go through the EZ-pass lanes, which speeds up our trip, but you also pay about one-third less for your tolls. And I hate paying tolls. This last time we took the Honda and we saved so much on gas money thta we actually spent more on tolls than we did on gas. That's crazy. And of course

you're always running into construction. So you say to yourself, "I'm paying these people top dollar so I can drive 40 miles an hour on their bumpy, dusty road?" But what are you gonna do?

I don't like construction but I do like the finished product of a new, smooth highway. And of course they make new roads so they can keep bringing in those exorbitant toll fees. Let's take Illinois, for example. What if when they finish with the construction on I-90, they don't see an increase in toll fees? Are they going to approach the company that made the roads and complain that there isn't enough traffic on the road they built? That's absurd, isn't it, because that's not their job. Their only job was to build an excellent road. It's someone else's job to increase revenue on the toll roads.

The same is true in our proclamation of the gospel. To use this analogy, we build the roads and God brings in the revenue. Now you've to build a good road. You've got to build period. But it's not your job and my job to increase revenue. Don't worry about how people respond to the proclamation of the gospel. That's not your job. It's not your responsibility. But this is what we tend to carry with us when we share our faith. "What will they think? What will they say? What if I cause them to further reject God?" We have all of these fears that run through our silly little heads but none of them have anything to do with us. We build the road and God saves the souls. Can you see that our biggest excuses are a form of idolatry? We are afraid that people will reject our message but we could only feel that way if we believe that it is our job to save people. And if we believe that it is our job to save people, then we are playing God, which is the highest form of idolatry.

Now most people don't actually articulate it this way. No one says, "I'm going to go witness to Bob over there so that I can save him." No one does that, but our actions betray our underlying belief. Quit worrying about the revenue and concentrate on the road. Quit worrying about the response to the gospel and concentrate instead on the proclamation of the gospel. Do you think this might help you to be more consistent in sharing your faith?

And proclaim we must. We need to pick up where we left off last week and let me review where we have come so far in this miniseries called Proclamation.

- 1. Proclaim on your knees**-*my prayer to God for them is that they may be saved*
- 2. Proclaim out of your heart's desire**-*my hearts desire for them is that they may be saved.*
- 3. Proclaim with clarity**- *they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*

Zeal without knowledge. We have got to make sure that the core of our gospel message is "based on knowledge." That we do not subtract or add anything to the gospel. This is where every church gets itself into trouble. Churches who subtract from the core of the gospel are liberal or else will inevitably slide into liberalism. Churches who add to the gospel are legalistic or else will inevitably slide into legalism.

Here we see the incredible relevance of Paul's words in verse three.

3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Even though in a real sense they on opposite sides of the spectrum, both liberals and legalists commit the same error.

1. They are ignorant of the righteousness of God.
2. They seek to establish their own righteousness.
3. They do not submit to God's righteousness.

It's easy to see how the Pharisees in Paul's day and the legalists in our day seek to establish their own righteousness. Some of you have come out of deep legalism in other churches and know exactly what I mean. The worst of them really create their own brand of Christianity. Yes, they have the gospel. They preach about the blood of Christ and the need to believe, but then they add a whole laundry list of things that must accompany salvation. A list of do's and don'ts that turn these churches into exclusive clubs of their own righteousness. They are they only are the truly saved ones and everyone else is wallowing in lostness. They "seek to establish their own righteousness" and it's not hard to see.

But what about the liberals? In what sense do they seek to establish their own righteousness? In many ways it would seem that they really don't care about God's righteousness, but that's exactly the point, isn't it? They don't care about God's righteousness, which is why they seek to establish their own. Take someone who is in the local New Age movement of eclectic beliefs. They may not call themselves a Christian. They aren't religious and you can't fit them into any strict category of spiritual belief. Nevertheless, they seek to establish their own righteousness.

Think about the word righteous. A Christian is made righteous by being justified by Christ. It's a slightly different meaning of the word, but you could say Christian 'justifies' himself by relying on the death and resurrection of Christ. You could ask a Christian, "How can you justify your actions?" and they would reply, "I justify my actions on the blood of Christ."

So do you see, everyone justifies their behavior. Everyone justifies or has a reason for the way they live their lives. A new ager has a set of beliefs and set of reasons as to why they live the way that they do. Don't misunderstand what I am saying. I am not saying that all non-believers are evil people. Many of them are some of the nicest people you will ever meet, but they all justify themselves. They justify their lives. They seek to establish their own righteousness. Does that make sense?

So if you are a legalist who adds to God's requirements or you are a liberal who takes away from God's requirements, both are seeking to establish their own righteousness. Which is why Paul summarized their position by saying "they do not submit to God's righteousness." That's the key statement in my opinion. It doesn't matter which end of the spectrum you are on, you either submit to God's righteousness or you don't.

Submission is an important part of gospel proclamation that gets brushed under the rug. Think about it. To express faith in Christ is 100% an act of submission. Every single person who is not a believer is not yet saved precisely because they have not submitted to God. I don't care if you are strung out on drugs and abusing your wife or if you sing in the church choir. If you are not submitted to Christ, you are seeking your own righteousness. You have justified yourself.

And everyone is skilled at justifying their behaviors, right? Think about every single conflict you've ever had with your children. If they don't clean their room like they are supposed to, what do they say when you ask them why they haven't done it? Do they say, "Mom, I am so sorry. I should have listened to you the first time. I'll go do it right now." Your heart's just not strong enough to hear such a reaction! Instead, you get stuff back like this. First, there's the outright lie. "I did clean it." Yeah, right. Once in a while they may have moved two large piles into one gigantic pile, but that's hardly cleaning. Or you might get the "get out of jail free card" reply, which is a favorite with all kids. "I forgot." Kids really believe that phrase is some sort of magical incantation that will get them out of all kinds of trouble, don't they? Try that when the IRS comes calling. "Oh, sorry, I just forgot to pay my taxes." Our kids would never just "forget" to go to work, but somehow they always forget to clean their rooms.

All of these are excuses. They are justifying their behavior. But we can't just pick on our kids because you and I do it too, don't we? This is not quite the kind of justifying I am getting at in terms of justifying their rejection of Christ, but it's close. If you have not submitted yourself to Christ, you have justified yourself. But saving faith requires submission. In order to come to faith in Christ, it requires us to admit that we were wrong. Not that we were close or that we were somewhat right or mostly right. In order to come to faith in Christ, we must admit that we were 100% wrong.

4. Proclaim with the need for submission.

This is what it means to submit to the righteousness of God. We admit that in some way we were seeking to establish our own righteousness. We admit that we were justifying ourselves. We then submit to God's righteousness. Now here's the simplicity of the gospel as declared in verse nine. *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.* Does that sound complicated to you? We will work that out in more detail here in a moment, but at its core, the gospel is really that simple.

However, do you see the level of submission required in this simple message? For now, don't worry about the "confessing" with your mouth versus "believing in your heart." They are one in the same. It doesn't matter if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord or if you confess that God raised him from the dead. It does not matter if you believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord or if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. The point is that you are believing *and* confessing BOTH of these. Both are necessary parts of the gospel which must be believed and confessed.

Does this mean that I literally have to confess these truths in order to be saved? The short answer is no. If we held to the idea that a person has to believe and literally confess these truths, then we could quickly get into another form of legalism. This is what can happen with baptism. Baptism is a type of public confession, right? This is why I like to hold our baptisms at places like Jersey Valley and why I like so many of our church family to be present. The person getting baptized is confessing to their fellow church family and to anyone else who happens to be watching that day that Jesus is Lord. They are also confessing--and again, I use that term loosely--it is a public profession--that God raised Jesus from the dead. I usually say the phrase, "Buried in the likeness of his death and raised in the likeness of his resurrection."

So baptism is a type of confession, but we don't believe that people must be baptized in order to be saved. But this is what some churches and some denominations do practice. In these churches, if you get saved in the morning service and are killed in a car crash before you can get baptized in the evening service, will you go to hell? Most people who require baptism for salvation would answer 'no' to that question. They would say that God's grace would extend far enough to cover you for such a thing. But still, you'd better get baptized as quickly as possible if you want to be sure you are saved.

So if we required a person to literally make a public profession, then this profession would be like the requirement of baptism, do you see? So don't take this in a hyper literal sense. You are not absolutely required to make a public profession of these beliefs in order to be saved. That's not what Paul meant.

On the other hand, if you refuse to make a public profession of belief in Christ as Lord and one who holds the power of life and death in his hand, then you might want to examine the reality--or absence-of your faith. Jesus said, *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* (Matthew 10:32-33). If you refuse to acknowledge your faith in Christ before others, could this not be a type of denial?

So what I am saying is that both are necessary parts of the gospel which must be believed and confessed. Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead. You certainly cannot leave either of these out and still have a gospel. Furthermore, true belief is itself a form of confession and a true confession is itself a form of belief.

But I want to get back to the necessity for submission, because I believe that this can be a missing piece of our gospel proclamation. If you confess and believe that "Jesus is Lord," what exactly are you doing and why is it important for a proper understanding and proclamation of the gospel? Here's a simple explanation. What if I asked you to make this confession: "Barack Obama is Lord"? I would hope the very first thing you would do is walk out of here. Then you would call a special congregational meeting and have me fired. Then you might even go so far as to have me committed to an asylum or even burned at the stake.

Now Democrats among us, relax. I don't say this because Obama is a Democrat. I would say the same thing if the profession was "George Bush is Lord" or even "Ronald Reagan is Lord" (although I think some conservatives come very close to this!) But you get my point, don't you? To put anyone's name in that sentence and say that he or she is Lord is the height of blasphemy. And it's blasphemy only because there is only one Lord.

But we tend not to understand the implications of the phrase "Jesus is Lord." Let me list a few of them for you.

1. It means that there is only one Lord. It's not as if there's a competition and Jesus came out on top of the heap. He is Lord. He is *the* Lord, the sovereign of the universe. This is a statement of exclusivity. *Jesus* is Lord. This speaks to every other pretender, every other religion. This confession is like Elijah's battle with the 800 prophets of Baal. It's a blood bath. You can't pick and choose.

2. It means that Jesus is God. This was Tim's emphasis a few weeks ago. Paul uses the Greek *kyrios*. *Kyrios* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Yahweh*. Right in the middle of this gospel proclamation Paul unequivocally declared that Jesus is God.

This is further born out in verse 13. *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* This is a direct and exact quote from Joel 2:32. Joel says the exact same thing in Hebrew and uses the word *Yahweh* for LORD. So it looks like this.

Romans 10:13- *For "everyone who calls on the name of the **Kyrios** will be saved."*
Joel 2:32- *everyone who calls on the name of **Yahweh** will be saved."*

So if we confess "Jesus is Lord" and if you call on the name of the Lord to be saved, there can be no doubt whatsoever that Paul is claiming that Jesus is God. This is a crystal clear statement of the deity of Christ. So when you say "Jesus is Lord" you are confessing that Jesus is your God and your Savior.

3. The confession that "Jesus is Lord" means that must give up any pursuit of seeking my own righteousness. We don't depend on baptism. We don't depend on our good works. We don't depend ourselves in any way. We turn from all of that. We reject it and call it what the apostle Paul called it--rubbish. Worse than rubbish because it can enslave your soul and blind you to the glorious truth of the gospel.

4. It means that we are submitting to the righteousness of God and submitting to God himself. The word submission gets a bad rap these days. It is a four-letter word for some people. Maybe you knew that the word Islam means submission. Submission is the essence of this religion. They blindly submit to the five pillars of Islam. Unquestioning obedience, whether that gives you calluses on your knees or encourages you to strap a bomb to your waist.

This is not the kind of submission that the Bible speaks of. Though make no mistake. The gospel requires submission. To declare Jesus alone as both your Lord and your Savior, requires that you admit how wrong you were and submit to his righteousness.

Here is an interesting verse from chapter 15. *And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."* (Romans 15:2) The root of Jesse is Jesus and Isaiah predicted that he would come to rule over the Gentiles. That's us. But what is submission to this ruler supposed to bring us? Hope. Isn't that cool? The one who rules over us, the one to whom we must submit, brings us hope. He brings us hope because he gives us himself. No other religion does this. No other claim to Lordship status actually has the sovereign ruler give himself for his sworn enemies. Our hope is found in our submission to Christ.

I need to ask you in all earnestness, "Are you converted?" Have you ever submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Maybe you just added Jesus into your spiritual life but never really submitted to him. I don't care if you are six years old or sixty years old. Have you submitted to Jesus as Lord? If you have not, today can be the day of your salvation. You can turn from

seeking your own righteousness and submit to the righteousness of God through faith in Christ alone.

If you are converted, do you plan to keep that all to yourself? If Christ is your greatest joy and hope, why would you not want to share that joy and hope with others?

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