

IT'S RIGHT THERE IN FRONT OF YOU!
Deuteronomy 30:11-16; Romans 10:5-17

(Read Romans 10:5-17)

Intro: A couple weeks ago we talked about George Whitfield, who was a very good friend of John and Charles Wesley and we talked about the fact that he's the one who changed the opening words of Hark the Herald, Angles Sing. Well, I have a quote from Whitfield concerning what we're looking at today which is Paul's discussion about the need for belief over effort. Whitfield wrote, "*What! Get to heaven on your own strength? Why, you might as well try to climb to the moon on a rope of sand!*"

The children of God have made our relationship with him so difficult! I remember when I was about 7 years old, my dad took his four youngest sons shopping where and he bought us our first new suits (prior to that we had hand me down sport coats and suits we had received from our cousins). The really important thing – and probably the most memorable, was he bought us each a tie and one for himself. Ostensibly it was for our oldest sister's wedding, but in 1964 ties were a huge thing – at least at my home church. Prior to that my dad had never worn a tie. In fact, he never wore a suit coat with lapels since he wore a plain suit like his wedding suit in this picture, and my mother wore a cape dress and a covering with strings on it. We never had an official dress code in the Brethren in Christ Church, but it was definitely a thing—unwritten but very real. A couple weeks ago I received the latest edition of the BIC journal, Brethren in Christ History and Life. I was reading one of the articles, incidentally, it was by my friend Andy Saylor who preached here a couple years ago, and he made reference to a resolution from the 1954 Rapho District Council meeting, held in Manheim, Pennsylvania concerning the proper length of a woman's hair. The resolution was adopted, and in reference to the length of a woman's hair, it said, very simply, "*As to the proper length of a woman's hair – it should never be cut.*" In other words, a proper BIC lady, or should I say, "sister" which is more proper, would have VERY long hair.

Now this was in an effort to be holy. Our growth in those days was largely biological growth so that after nearly 175 years the number of members in the BIC denomination in North America was only about 5,000 people. But if someone showed interest in joining the church, one of the first things they did was dress them differently. Yep, the Brethren drove a hard holiness bargain and part of holiness was how you looked and dressed. They would make sure that for men the shirt was buttoned all the way up to the top and you would NEVER, EVER wear a tie. And if you were a woman you needed to wear a cape dress (describe it) and a covering with strings. And that cape dress would be down to your ankles with sleeves to your wrists and you would wear black stockings – they would have looked just like Mother and Daddy in this photo. (Tell about Mother wanting to wear white stockings).

Dressing like this showed that you were a Christian – or so they thought. But in Romans 10, which I read earlier, Paul is saying that this is a righteousness based on the law – sure, it wasn't the old Jewish Law, but it was certainly the something very similar just 2000 years later. Referring back to that scripture that Martha read earlier from Deuteronomy 30, Paul makes reference to Moses's admonishment about righteousness – and he was telling the people of God that the person who does the commandments *shall live by them* Romans 10:5b. And then he proceeds to compliment the Jewish law with assurance that if you can do all the law that's good. And the old BIC Brethren strived to do that too. But it was works. It wasn't as much about faith. Paul is saying that for righteousness, what we really need is more faith and less effort, because it's all up to God in the end. You can tell by what Paul says in our text that he doesn't leave it there, he adds you must believe. And when you do that – then you need to spread the message and we have all the resources right here at our fingertips – his word is near us – No! It's in us. So as we are now practically ten days into a new year – let's resolve to live and share our faith. So that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

First of all – Paul asks . . .

Why work so hard – its right in front of you! Take it!

- But Christ Followers have always made it more difficult than it needs to be. William Barclay describes the Sabbath Law as it had become from the time Moses received it on Mount Sinai to Paul's day. It had been studied and expanded and it was exact. Listen: "*It was laid down exactly how for a man could walk on the Sabbath. It was laid down that he must lift no burden which weighed more than two dried figs. It was laid down that no food must be cooked on the Sabbath. It was laid down that, in the event of sickness, measures*

might be taken to keep the patient from becoming worse, but not to make him better.” I mean, WOW! That’s specific! You can make little Johnny, who has strep throat, comfortable, but do not under any condition give him antibiotics so that maybe he might get better.

- Now, we snicker at that, but Barkley tells us, “. . . *this is not something to smile at, but to admire. The way of the law was not easy. No one would undertake it at all unless he was supremely in earnest. Zealous the Jews were and are. Paul had no difficulty in granting that, but the zeal was misdirected and misapplied.*
- FB Meyer writes in his commentary that the immediate purpose of this passage in Romans 10, is to show Christ Followers that “. . . *all things needful for a holy life are within their reach. The love and grace of God are not concealed as hidden mysteries might be. There is no need to undertake how long and dangerous journey like that which brought the Eastern Magi to the manger bed of Bethlehem. The word of God, which is another name for our Lord, is very near to us. All we have is to lift our heart to him in simple faith and confess him as our Savior and Lord and we are assured of salvation for the penalty and power of sin. Love to God and compliance with his will is the only way of life and peace. Let us choose this narrow path. The gate is straight but the way becomes always easy for you. It is narrow but pleasant.*” (End Quote) It’s right there! We don’t have to make it a lot of work – or dress some special way or eat or refrain from eating certain foods. We need to confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe that he rose again – that’s it.
- It’s like this, Paul makes sure to point that the way of salvation is not difficult and remote, but near and easy. Salvation is a matter of personal trust in a living Savior and then we tell the world about by our telling the world about verbally and then in obedience by being baptized. Next week we’re going to begin a series from the Book of Acts and as we study that we will see that after Peter preached on Pentecost there were over 3,000 people saved and that they were baptized. It’s a natural progression.
- So . . .

This is what it takes to be saved

- I can’t say it better than Charles Spurgeon, “*Believe that he can save you; believe that he will save you; in everything leave the whole matter of your salvation with him in unquestioning confidence. Depend on him without fear as to your present and eternal salvation. This is the faith which saves the soul.*”
- But what Paul is saying here was, and still is risky business. Listen to it again . . . 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.* Romans 10:9-10. Such a confession could be fatal. Just think about, by saying Jesus is Lord means you are putting him on the same level with the emperor (if you were a good Roman) or with Jehovah (if you were good Jew. So it was a powerful statement of faith to call Jesus Lord because if Jesus is Lord, no one or nothing else is Lord.
- But Christ is the end of the law: Jesus is the end of the law for those who believe. The law ends for the believer in the sense that our obedience to the law is no longer the basis for our relationship with God.
- And here is a big thing – this salvation is not just for some, it’s for all! Kenneth Foreman writes, “*Paul was a theologian of high rank; the church has never placed anyone beside him. But he had no theological conceit. He did not confuse theology with faith. God does not think most highly of the people who can pass theological examinations with the highest marks. Paul never says: in order to be saved, you must believe every word I have written. He does not say: either believe as I do or you are not a true Christian. In one sentence (Romans 10:9) He makes it quite plain that there are two essentials. One is to acknowledge Jesus as Lord; the other is to believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Paul does not say that this is all there is to Christian belief. He does say that this much is saving faith.*”
- It’s the name of Jesus that is so full of significance. In the Christmas story, which is still fresh in our memory, Joseph receives a message in a vision from God that he is to marry Mary as planned because it was God’s plan for the salvation of all humanity. In fact these are the exact words Joseph received, *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* Matthew 1:21. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. Think about it, the very name Jesus, or, the Hebrew, Yeshua literally Jehovah is salvation or Jehovah saves. Jesus, is a saving name.

- But . . .

How will others know?

- They need to hear! Well, we need to tell them!!! Guzik says, “*No wonder those who preach have beautiful feet – they partner with God for the salvation of men. The feet speak of activity, motion, and progress, and those who are active and moving in the work of preaching the gospel have beautiful feet.*”
- And they will respond in some way. If people hear the message, they need to respond and there are no excuses. But people make them. Barclay talks about the ignorance which comes from the neglect of knowledge. He writes, “*There is a legal Maxim which says that genuine ignorance may be a defense, but neglect of knowledge never is. A man cannot be blamed for not knowing what he never had a chance to know; but he can be blamed for electing to know that which was always open to him. In other words, we are responsible for failing to know what we might have known.*” A perennial FAQ (Frequently Asked Question) is, “What about the people who have never heard the Gospel? Will they go to hell?” My answer is God is a God of mercy and grace and he’s in charge so let’s let that up to him and go about what our job is to be the lovely feet who take the good news to people who have never heard.
- And it’s not up to us whether or not they accept the message. F. B. Meyer says, as he’s referring to the difficult process we make of salvation, the whole reason of rejection of the Gospel lay in *the inveterate refusal to submit*. We just want to do things our way. Then he goes on to say “. . . *if only God will allow us to scale the heights or form the depths, or do some great thing, to make some vast sacrifice, we should be satisfied to be saved, and his help in the process would not be resented. But it is intolerable to our proud hearts to be told that our own efforts are useless, and that the exclusive source of salvation is God's grace.* God’s the one who saves.
- You must believe that Jesus is risen from the dead. You can’t just believe that he was a nice guy who was crucified. He was the Risen Son of God and then, when you have believed that Jesus is risen from the dead, you need to confess that with your lips. Barclay says “*Not only God, but also our fellow men must know what side we are on.*” Here is a great piece of wisdom: We cannot be wimpy Christians who are afraid to say what we stand for.

Conclusion: Let’s be bold in this New Year. We have God’s word right here, let’s get into it. We have the simple message about that word. It’s right here in front of us – listen again. *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.* Romans 10:8-10. It’s simple message. Take the simple and saving message – let your feet be beautiful with the message of Good News they carry. Amen.