

Romans 10:9-17. 18th after Pentecost - 18.9.2016

Jesus - our only Saviour!

⁹ 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 it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. ¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." ¹² Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³ For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

¹⁶ But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "Lord, who has believed our message?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. [NLT]

What must we do to be saved? What must I do to become a member of the church?

This question has been answered in different ways, and many people may have been put off by the requirements that were put before them: 'You must take part in a confirmation course', could be the answer of Lutherans. Others might say, 'You must take part in an Alpha Course'.

What must you do to be saved? Paul's answer is slightly different. It is simply, Believe that

Jesus is our only Saviour!

In a video presentation by Rob Bell called 'The God's aren't angry' he speaks about all the things people did so that they would be acceptable to their gods. When had you done enough - how could you know whether they had accepted your offering if you made a sacrifice so that it would rain, and then it remained dry.

What to us today sounds like very detailed instructions about sacrifice can actually mean: Once you have done these things, you have done enough. God

does not demand extreme sacrifices - and definitely not your oldest son! But then God gave his only Son. This was the only sacrifice which would be enough to bring us back to God again. This sacrifice is enough, however - nothing more needs to be added to it! This sacrifice - and only this sacrifice - makes it possible for us to be reconciled to God. This sacrifice of God's Son is the basis on which we have been saved, and have become members of the church.

That is why Paul can write here, **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.** There really is no other way to be saved from the consequence of our life apart from God. This is something we need to believe with all our heart, and to confess what Jesus has done for us.

Paul had tried the other route - of trying to live a life which would please God, and of doing even more than the law required. In the end he had to acknowledge that this did not save him. All his striving to be a better person had only led to him comparing himself with others - and if you constantly have to do more and more, when have you ever done enough.

The thing is, Jesus is not interested in how 'decent' you are - his interest is your salvation! He is not impressed by your CV and everything you have achieved - and certainly there are those who have achieved a great deal in their congregation and church. Paul - who had achieved a great deal in his zeal to serve God - looked back on all the things he had done - on all the traditions of what to do -, and said that he had come to realise that it was all garbage.

It is only **by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.** It is by believing that Jesus' death on the cross, and his having been raised again to life is the only way to God - by trusting his promise that he has 'done it all' for you and me, that we are saved. All our efforts to achieve a better status as Christians will fail.

In Galatians Paul points to the danger of those who think that they must do more - and his damning verdict is, "... **if you are trying to make yourselves right with God**

by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace."

(Galatians 5:4)

It's a bit like someone who has to go for chemotherapy. What they must 'do', is to be willing to receive this treatment. But then it is up to the chemicals to do their part. Some people want to know all about the medicine that they are being given - and there is nothing to be said against that. But, the medicine does not become more effective if you know what it is - you have to trust that it will do, what it must. And it may well be that if you try to add your own concoction, which is meant to make you even better, that you may in fact be harming your chances of being healed.

Of course we, who have been saved, want to know more about Jesus and what he did for us. We come together here in church to hear his Word, and to experience his presence. We may read daily devotions and possibly also some passages of Scripture. We may attend Bible-study groups where we learn even more about him. We may take time out from our hectic lives to spend time reading God's Word and meditating on it.

What Jesus did - by his death once and for all time, and by his being raised to life again - has given us a special place in heaven. So all the things we do, we do not do to be saved, but because we have been saved! There is no 'more special' place for those who have a degree in theology, or if you have published learned books on how to read and understand the Bible. There is no more special place in heaven for those who have read the entire Bible - for the 10th time.

Our place in heaven is assured, because of what Jesus did for us. Whatever we do - and it is good that we do these things! - is not to add on to what Christ has done, but because what he has done for us, has changed our lives. Whatever we do, is because we realise how much he has given us.

Of course, if you have been healed, you speak about it. Of course, because Christ has done everything so that I may return to God once more, I speak about it. How else are others to hear where they can be saved, if we don't tell

them.

We have good news for those who need to hear the message of salvation. But we also have good news for all those who think that they must still add something more to what Christ did. For a while this may seem to be the right thing to do - but inevitably we tire ourselves out by trying to do everything ourselves to live a good life. Somewhere along the line, we come to a point where we think, I simply can't make it!

What a great message for a person like this, if you can tell them, 'I feel just like you. On my own, I just can't do it - but we are not left to do this all on our own. Here is the one, who will save you from running and trying to do more and more. Jesus has done it all for you. All you need to do, is to trust his promise, and to receive what he has done for you. All you need to do, is to look away from what you do, so that you can see what he has done for you!'

What must we do to be saved? We believe and confess: Jesus came to save us - to bring the one sacrifice which would bring us back to God. He is the only way to have life now and in eternity. And because of this, we do all we can for him now - and do all in our power to know more of him, and of what he has made us to be.