

Genuine God-Given Faith

Romans 10:9-14

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction:

The title of today's message is "Genuine God-Given Faith." In 2 Corinthians 13 God through the Apostle Paul gives this command: **"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves..."** (2 Cor. 13:5a). I want to challenge all who hear this to heed that command, (and in keeping with today's subject) to examine ourselves by God's Word as to whether our faith is truly the genuine God-given faith as set forth in scripture – the faith God gives to all who are truly saved.

II. The Command to Believe:

- A. Our primary text today is taken from Romans 10 and there in vs 13, Paul, quoting the Prophet Joel, boldly declares **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."**
- B. In Acts 16, when the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, **"...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"** <We read...> ³¹**And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, ..."** (Acts 16:30b-31a).
- C. Consider in Mark 16:15-16 when our Lord gave His disciples the great commission we read, **"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."** And of course this Gospel is the good news of how God saves sinners in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- D. Now these and other similar passages communicate clearly and boldly to us a promise that calling on the name of the Lord, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, (i.e. – as His Person and work are set forth in the Gospel) is a clear evidence of salvation – declared so boldly as we would say, "You can take this to the bank." So it is important that we understand what this "believing" on Christ means for clearly it pertains to the issues of eternal life or death, eternal salvation or damnation, heaven or hell. And the reason I emphasize this is because as simple as this may seem, sadly, most of so-called "Christianity" in our day who – even though they will claim to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and may (like me in years past) sincerely believe that they do, the vast majority actually are believing in a counterfeit "Jesus – not the Christ set forth in God's Gospel in God's Word. And I'll elaborate on this as we go forward.

But to begin with, this shouldn't be a surprise given how replete the Epistles are with warnings to beware of the deception of false preachers, of false gospels – even warning they'll come preaching another "jesus" – not the Christ of the Bible. This is important to me because I have many friends that remain tragically deceived and I know first-hand the folly of what they believe because I once shared in that belief – what I now know to have been my unbelief. I take no joy in saying that but if your house is on fire, don't you want to know it? I pray that by God's grace (in keeping with the fulfillment of His perfect will), He will grant true faith and repentance as He has purposed and promised to grant (without fail) to all the objects of His everlasting love in Christ. Christ purchased no less than that for them.

III. Genuine God-given Faith:

So let's ask ourselves, is your faith / my faith the genuine, God-given faith of all the saved as it is distinguished in God's Word?

First, know that the scripture makes it clear that the faith of the saved is a gift from God. We often quote God's declaration in Ephesians 2:8-9, "***For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.***"

Many unwittingly deny the need for God's miraculous gift of faith in their presumption to have fulfilled some requirement as prescribed by their denomination (accept Jesus as your personal savior, walk this aisle, whatever is prescribed) in order to be saved. I know many will still insist (as I would have) that such an exercise of faith was the God-given gift of faith, but their doctrine tells on them. You may have heard (as I have) some of the feeble attempts to reconcile their false gospel with responses such as: "Well, God loves everybody and He gives the gift of faith to everyone, but you have to open the gift."

That's not salvation by grace because the real difference maker in their salvation (and whatever that real difference-maker is, that's your savior) – their real difference-maker that they presume counts them among the saved is their faith. That's not God-given faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's faith in faith. You see, genuine God-given subjective faith (i.e. – your believing) is also distinguished in God's Word by its object, the objective body of faith – in Whom or what you believe.

From our text, in Romans 10, I want us to examine 2 identifying distinctions of genuine, God-given faith here in God's Word. 1) The object of faith – i.e., In what and/or whom do you believe? and 2) Is it a heart work known by its object and also is it a heart work in that it is more than a mere head knowledge or an assent to truth?

IV. Romans 10:9-14:

A. Romans 10:9: In Romans 10:8 Paul described the word of faith (the word which God-given faith receives) which he preached, saying, beginning in verse 9, that they preached: ***“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*** Many have memorized this verse in isolation so as to gain a false sense of comfort from a mere mental agreement with the historical truth of Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection. Millions who profess to believe on Christ truly believe that Jesus Christ lived, died, and was raised from the dead. And so they claim this verse so as to conclude that their assent to this truth assures them of their salvation. But as we consider this verse in its fuller context, you will see that the faith of which Paul is writing here goes far beyond that. Recall how James wrote in James 2:19, ***“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”*** The devils also believe and would confess that God raised Christ from the dead so clearly such an agreement with the facts is not that of which Paul is writing.

When Paul speaks of God having raised Christ from the dead, that presupposes His death, which presupposes His life and obedience on earth in coming down from heaven (the Lord Jesus Christ – the sovereign God-man) to do the Father’s will to save all that the Father had given Him by perfectly satisfying the law and justice of God on their behalf as evidenced by His resurrection – the righteousness of God which demands life. And Paul calls this believing a belief ***“...in thine heart..”*** Let’s look at the rest of the passage to understand this work of the heart.

B. Romans 10:10: ***“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*** So we see that Paul is expressing the genuine concern and interest in Christ for righteousness. (Quote Rom. 10:4) I was guilty for years of quoting Romans 10:9 or 10:13 as an example of how easily one could be saved if they’d simply do their part and believe these truths about Christ, and that at a time when I had no clue about the righteousness of God in Christ which Paul distinguishes here as part and parcel of what the heart (the mind, the affections, the will) believes. As I noted earlier from the great commission passage in Mark, God makes it clear that to believe the Gospel is to be saved and to believe it not is to be damned. Well consider this distinguishing mark of the Gospel. In Romans 1:16-17, Paul wrote: ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith*** <the objective body of faith – what we believe> ***to faith***<the subjective gift of faith whereby we believe>: ***as it is written, The just*** <the righteous – made right, not guilty before God> ***shall live by faith.”*** Believing on Christ is believing the Gospel of Christ wherein His righteousness is revealed.

Now I once believed (as most who call themselves “Christians” in our day believe) that I believed the gospel but I now know it wasn’t God’s gospel because I had never heard of the righteousness of God and here we see – it is that which is revealed in the Gospel (the body of faith), that which we believe by God-given faith and which makes it the very power of God unto salvation to those who believe. It is this righteousness that demanded Christ be raised from the dead. (Rom. 5:21 & 8:10). Like multitudes in our day, in my ignorance of the righteousness of God (both what it is and of my desperate need for it) I was not making a confession with my mouth so as to ascribe my whole salvation unto Him, based upon the sole ground of His imputed righteousness to me. That’s another vital thing I knew nothing about – the doctrine of imputation. I didn’t know I needed righteousness nor had I heard anything about how I could come to possess this perfect righteousness of God.

But thankfully, through the preached Gospel of God’s grace in Christ, setting forth His righteousness – His perfect satisfaction to God’s injured law and justice due unto sin by His payment of the sin debt on the cross, I also learned how the merit of His work was graciously made to be mine. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 teaches us, **“For he <God the Father> hath made him <God the Son> to be sin for us, <the spotless God-man> who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”** This describes the imputation (the accounting or charging) of sins to Christ who had no part in producing them, so that those for whom He lived and died would have righteousness imputed (charged or accounted) unto them – a righteousness they had no part in producing. That’s grace and that’s good news to a sinner.

- C. Romans 10:11-14: Picking up again with our text, in verse 11 we read, **“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.** <To believe unto righteousness is what it means to “believe on Him” and that won’t disappoint. You can take that to the bank. Verse 12...> **¹²For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. ¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?** We know that to call on the name of the Lord means more than simply invoking the title or the name of Jesus. As Christ said in Matthew 7:21a, **“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;...”** He went on to say He would profess unto them that He never knew them, describing those things they would plead as works of iniquity. No – to call upon the name of the Lord is to call upon Him as identified and distinguished in the scripture. And in keeping with the context of Romans 10, it is to call on Him as He is described in Jeremiah, as the “LORD our righteousness.” That is what genuine, God-given faith believes with the heart unto and confesses as their sole ground of salvation.

And then notice at the end of our text, the preached Gospel is emphasized as God's ordained means of calling His people unto Himself – that Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed (to bring this back full circle). And that's why we do what we can to spread this Gospel, a message that is indeed a rarity in the pulpits of our day.

As we see here in Romans 10, where the righteousness of God is not preached, the Gospel is not heard and how shall they believe (from the heart unto righteousness) that which they have not heard. But don't fret – God's people will hear and believe as Christ said, ***"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."*** (John 6:37)

V. The Philippian Jailer, Acts 16:

- A. In my opening remarks, I noted several verses such as Romans 10:9 that are often quoted in isolation from their contexts and from the broader context of the whole of scripture so as to promote the heresy of salvation based upon man's ultimate presumed, difference-making decision to receive or accept Christ in order to be saved (or some other work that proceeds from the sinner). And as I hope you've seen from Romans that by looking at the fuller context, we see not only subjective faith mentioned (our act of believing) but we see the distinguishing object of that faith – to what and in Whom genuine, God-given faith looks. We're to look to look unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).
- B. Well, let's consider a similar verse often recited which I quoted at the onset from Acts chapter 16. It's worth spending time here because I've heard people hear messages like this and reply, "I don't know about all that doctrine. I simply take God in His word when He says, ***"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,..."*** And they take that to mean they're saved because they have believed something pertaining to Christ. Those are the unambiguous, God-inspired recorded words of Paul and Silas in response to the Philippian jailer.

If you recall the story, Paul and Silas had gone to Philippi and were persecuted for preaching the Gospel there. They had been beaten, placed into shackles and thrown into jail. Then at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God in spite of their circumstances and we're told the prisoners heard them. Then suddenly there was a great earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison and all the prison doors opened and all the shackles fell loose. So the keeper of the prisoners awoke and in seeing the doors open and assuming the prisoners would have fled, he drew out his sword with the intent to kill himself (apparently preferring that to the potentially torturous death he may have endured due to the escape of the prisoners under his watch).

And picking up in Acts 16, vs. 28 we read, ***“But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. ²⁹Then he <the jailer> called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. ³²And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*** <Take note of that – this conversion did not take place without the Gospel, the word of the Lord, being set forth and heard. Verse 33...> ³³***And he <the jailer> took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. ³⁴And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”***

C. The Nature of the Question (vs. 30):

1. Let’s consider this most natural of questions asked by the Philippian jailer after his interest had been stirred up by this earthquake of God’s providence. And that’s what needs to happen in the conversion of a sinner – God has to get our attention. The literal translation of “***...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?***” is just as you might expect. He is asking “What is necessary for me to do in order that I may be saved?” It is a good question in the sense that it shows an interest in eternal things. And it will prove to be a fruitful one, but only if one properly understands and heeds the answer given. And that takes spiritual life – a new heart.
2. Note the underlying presupposition in the question: Note, that as with many questions, it presupposes something. Here that something presupposed is this: That there is something necessary for me to do, that I can do in order to be saved. Many questions are like that. E.g. – The question, “Are you feeling better?” presupposes that you weren’t feeling so well previously.
3. And the presupposition in the question of vs. 30 is as natural to fallen man as taking our next breath. We don’t even have to think. Just tell me what is necessary that I must do.

B. The Nature of the Answer (Vs. 31):

1. A Correction by way of contrast: Let me suggest to you that the answer given here is one which corrects the presupposition embodied in the question rather than confirming it. Yet it also provides the relevant information that is needed.
2. Example: For example, if I invited you to a dinner party and you politely asked, “What would you like for me to bring?” If I answer, “It’s all being catered. The food’s prepared and completely taken care of.” I would be telling you it is all finished.

So rather than answering your question so as to confirm the assumption that I may like for you to bring something to the table, my answer corrects your mistaken assumption that I would like for you to bring something by telling you it's already taken care of by someone else. And that is akin to what the Gospel sets forth which is how we can know what the intent of the answer they gave was. Nothing about the sentence structure will cause us to see that. No, we know because of the broader context of the Bible that sets forth Christ and His finished work.

3. Likewise in verse 31... when Paul and Silas answer, ***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...”*** they are telling the jailer that there is nothing he can do but rather he is to believe on the doing and dying of another – he is to trust in, rely on, another based upon what He (the Lord Jesus Christ) alone has done.
4. The folly of thinking otherwise can be likened to the foolishness of telling a corpse that they must do something in order to have life? As silly as that sounds, that is exactly what we first imagine when we interpret a phrase like this in isolation from the testimony of other scripture which declares to us our initial spiritual deadness. That is, people void of any spiritual faculties of life– who are unable to believe – are told that if they will believe, they can as a result of their believing gain life and that eternally. The scripture describes even those to whom God gives life to (those He quickens) as those who were ***“...dead in trespasses and sin”*** (Eph 2:1). If you're spiritually alive right now, you were once spiritually dead.

This reminds me of what is set forth in 2 Peter 1:20b, how ***“..no scripture is of any private interpretation.”*** The Bible isn't there for us to cherry pick verses to concoct what we choose to believe, but it relates to us a very specific Gospel that is to be believed.

VI. Repentance:

So from our Romans 10 passage, I hope you've seen today how the validity of our faith as to whether it is genuine, God-given faith can be examined by...

- A. Its object – Faith looks unto Christ as the Lord our righteousness. It believes God's Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed. And 2ndly, we can know of the validity of our faith by considering whether it is more than a mere mental agreement with truth, but that it has reached the heart – that it is...
- B. A Heart work – that as we saw from Romans 10, it will have us believing unto righteousness – pleading the very righteousness of God imputed as our only hope and plea for salvation, seeing its necessity in order for us to stand before a holy God, accepted in our Surety and Substitute, Jesus Christ, based upon the merits of the substitutionary, justice-satisfying work of redemption that God has freely put to my account and how do I know He has? Because He has graciously brought me to rely solely upon it for all my salvation and to repent of the evil of having ever thought otherwise.

Many people think believing with the heart simply means to really believe something but be careful, because you can really believe a lie – what the Bible calls the “deceivableness of unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:10). That would not be the heart work of genuine God-given faith as distinguished by its object, no matter how much one really believed that false gospel. And yet we know that this heart faith is indeed impressed upon our whole being, our minds, our affections, our wills.

- C. Repentance -- But I believe there is a 3rd identifying characteristic of genuine God-given faith that isn't explicitly brought out in our text for today, but one of such importance I would be remiss if I didn't include it. I'm referring to the initial repentance that takes place in the regeneration and conversion of all who are saved. And this certainly relates to our text in that 1) the object of our faith / our gospel changes (so repentance takes place) and 2) I believe this initial repentance only exists where a “believing with the heart” has taken place – the work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to repent of our former, natural, mistaken notions about salvation and about our former god as we imagined him to be.

I'm speaking of the repentance from former idolatry and dead works that always accompanies genuine, God-given faith. To turn to the true and living God by faith in the newness of life is to turn away from the false god(s) of our imagination. Remember how Paul wrote to the Thessalonians how he knew of their election by their belief in the Gospel which He said came not to them in word only but also in power by the Holy Spirit (a work of the heart). He added that he knew how they had received their Gospel message in that they had *...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;*” (1 Thess. 1:9). This repentance is a turning away from what Proverbs describes as the *“...way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”* (Prov. 16:25). I'm not talking about the ongoing repentance, our ongoing sorrow for our sins (as believers do experience), but rather I'm talking about the initial repentance as Paul described in Philippians 3.

He begins that chapter citing all those things he once thought counted for something before God and then said this of them beginning in Philippians 3:7, *“But what things were gain to me, <not that which I knew I shouldn't have been doing, but what I though counted for something before God> **those I counted loss for Christ.** ⁸*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,* ⁹*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness,* <no longer looking to my dead works> *which is of the law,* <that is by me meeting some requirement> *but that which is through the faith* <or faithfulness> *of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”**

If I can look back and count myself (or others) saved apart from belief of God's true Gospel wherein Christ's righteousness is revealed, then that shows I really haven't been brought to a heart faith where Christ and His righteousness (and nothing else) will do for me. That's to have no need to repent. Sadly, many who even profess to believe the doctrines of grace seem to have received the truth in word only, some believing that they've just progressed or grown into a "higher" knowledge of things, yet their understanding of those things aren't vital to their salvation, to distinguishing the Gospel that is believed upon unto salvation from a false gospel. We don't continue to give credence to a lie about how God saves sinners (a false gospel) if we recognize and truly believe from the heart that it is a lie – doctrine that dishonors every attribute of the true and living God and dares to place some work of the sinner's hand in rivalry with what it took to save – the precious blood of Christ and that alone.

No one knowingly worships an idol. Neither will anyone repent of an idol that they don't recognize it to be one. So in their minds, it's not idolatry to them if they can count themselves and others saved while denying the Gospel doctrine of Christ, of salvation by grace – conditioned on Christ alone. That's to not see the need for repentance and certainly would not prompt someone to identify and say with Paul, that I count those things **"...but dung, that I may win Christ,..."** – not if I imagine others could somehow be saved under such teaching. The absence of this repentance is evidence that (though one may have learned some truth) they have not been granted the genuine God-given gift of faith whereby one believes with the heart unto righteousness.

We all would do well to keep in mind that the doctrine of Christ really does matter as we read in 2 John 1:9-11: ***"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."***

VII.Closing: Well to bring this altogether, consider that after leaving Philippi in Acts chapter 16, in the very next chapter Paul eventually ends up in Athens, speaking to the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill. And I wanted you to see how this repentance that always accompanies genuine, God-given faith is related there to this righteousness which with the heart we look to by faith.

In Acts 17 at the end of Paul's discourse on Mars Hill, he noted in verse 30 how God **"...commandeth all men (not just some, but all men) *every where to repent:* ³¹***Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.***"**

The standard by which all are judged is the perfect, justice-satisfying merits of the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ (His righteousness). And because of this, we are commanded to repent (turn away from) the evil, natural notions that anything other than the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed could qualify us so as to be accepted before a holy God.

So look to Christ and His righteousness alone because we're assured it got the job done by His resurrection because just as sin demands death, righteousness demands life. The sins of God's elect imputed to (or put to the account of) Christ demanded His death as just payment for their sin debt – a debt which He willingly incurred. And His perfect work of righteousness demanded that He live along with all those for whose sins He died – those to whom His righteousness is imputed – or put to their account. Based upon His imputed righteousness they live both spiritually and eternally.

That's where genuine, God-given faith looks. ***"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;..."*** (Romans 10:10a).

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.