

First, Believe That He Is

Romans 10:8-21 (KJV)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; **9** 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. **10** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. **11** For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. **12** For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. **13** For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. **14** How 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? **15** And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! **16** But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? **17** So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. **18** But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. **19** But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. **20** But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. **21** But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Focus Verse

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Focus Thought

Faith is the foundation of the Christian experience. By it we can access righteousness and salvation.



Kurt Gödel was an Austrian mathematician who worked logic. Born 1906 in Austria, he died in 1978. He is most famous for a proof he authored in 1931 which is translated from German as:

Any effectively generated theory capable of expressing elementary arithmetic cannot be both consistent and complete. For any consistent, effectively generated formal theory that proves certain basic arithmetic truths, there is an arithmetical statement that is true, but not provable in the theory (Kleene 1967).

In other words, nothing is ever completely knowable. Nothing is ever completely provable. Everything you think you know in the world is based on an assumption.

Gödel based his theory on an interesting tactic. He started with a system and demonstrated that conclusions follow from assumptions. You must start with some things that you believe to be true. You then take those things and say, if that is true, then this must also be true. And if that is true, then this other thing must be true." Nowhere in this process, however, will you be able to derive the thing with which you started. Every logical conclusion takes you farther and farther away from the starting point. What Gödel did, then was to create another system that started with different assumptions and logically derived the first assumptions from them. But then he still had some assumptions that he could not prove. So, he created another system, and another.

Eventually he would wind up back at the system with which he had started. So, through a paradox of logic he could prove some things are not provable. Like the lap game people play at camp, each theory relies on the theory behind it for support.

So, everything you do in your day is based upon something that cannot be proven. That does not mean that it is not true, only that it cannot be proven. You must assume that something is true and then act per that belief.

For example, in math you assume that a number is equal to itself. So, you go to the bank and say, "I want my seven dollars." The teller pulls out some money and says, "One two three, four, five, seven." You say, "This is only six." "No sir, didn't you hear me count? One, two, three, four, five, seven."

You start with the assumption; the thing you cannot prove, and you proceed from there. You cannot go from the assumption to the conclusion and wind up back at the assumption again. Like the people in the picture with the people sitting on laps, no one goes around the circle and then finds that they are sitting on their own legs.

I cannot start with a piece of furniture and re-create the person who built it. I cannot derive someone's DNA based on an examination of the methods they used to fasten the wood together. I might be able to start with a person and determine whether they can build the furniture, but I cannot start with the furniture (conclusion) and derive the person that built it (assumption.)

If two people start with different assumptions, then the course of logic will lead them to different conclusions. So, if I see the pastor out driving his car. If I assume that he does not have a license, then my logic goes:

Assume: Pastor does not have a license.

It is illegal to drive a car without a license.

Pastor is driving a car.

Therefore: The Pastor is breaking the law.

On the other hand, my logic can go like this:

Assume: Pastor has a valid license.

It is illegal to drive a car without a license.

Pastor is driving a car.

Therefore: The Pastor believes that everyone should follow the law.

Different assumptions can lead to very different conclusions. Where you start determines where you end. If I ask two different people to build a podium, I will probably wind up with very different designs.

Gödel could use logic to prove the overwhelming necessity of faith. Not only does faith exist, it exists in all things. There is no system of logic, mathematics, or even religion can exist without a belief in something; an assumption that cannot be proven. Indeed, he proved that things can be true but cannot be proven. Since you cannot prove something is true, you must accept its truth on faith.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

I am always surprised by people who try to prove that God exists. You find this especially with Creationists who try to say that because Creation exists, therefore God exists. No, you cannot do that, because even the Bible says so. "...must first believe that he is..." God is the assumption and everything else is logically derived from that.

Evolutionists often make the same mistake, strangely enough. They say, "If I assume that God does not exist, and if I can create a theory that describes the world I see without the existence of God, therefore God does not exist." No, just because you can describe how the Universe is, doesn't mean that God does not exist. God is separate from Creation. God created Creation, but God is not the same as Creation. Just as you cannot start with the podium and derive the person who created it, so you cannot start with Creation and derive the God who created it.

A Carpenter is not made of screws, nails, and wood. The carpenter may use these materials, but he himself is not those things. So, it is with God and Creation. Creation is not God and God is not Creation.

Both groups start with a different assumption and wind up at different places. Yet both point to the other and say, "I have used logic and arrived here therefore this location is correct."

Salvation for Ourselves

Our lesson today begins in the middle of a quote, so I will start where I think it should.

<p>Romans 10:6-8 (KJV) 6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) 7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (KJV) 11 For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.</p>
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This phrase, "in thy mouth and in thy heart," is the key to this lesson. The author of Romans hits these two words numerous times over the next few verses. He wants us to know that the key to knowing God is not to be found in our heads (as logic is.) You cannot logically come to God. The key to God is in your mouth and your heart.

The key to salvation is not far away from you. You don't need someone to go up onto a high mountain to bring the knowledge of salvation to you. It is

not in a faraway land over the ocean. It is close. Very close. In fact, it is inside you. Salvation is in your own mouth and in your own heart.

I like the Spanish word here. Where it says “heart” in English, it says “Ser” in Spanish. That is, your innermost being; the thing that makes you who you are.

Romans 10:9-10 (KJV)

9 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.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Again, this use of “mouth” and “heart.” You are saved by believing on Him in your heart and speaking that confession with your mouth. The Jewish tradition is one where belief follows action. That is, you do first and maybe belief will follow. But even if belief never comes, you still do. The author of Romans seems to be addressing this understanding.

For example, the origins of our baptism come from the Jewish mikveh. This was a ceremonial wash that everyone had to do to enter the congregation after an illness or sin. People went to the mikveh every month. Month upon month, year upon year, decade upon decade, century upon century. But because there was no power in the mikveh, it never ended.

Baptism, on the other hand, occurs after belief. You come to believe in Jesus first and only then do you go into the water. Because the belief comes before the water, the water has power. So much power, in fact, that your soul only needs to go into that water once.

Salvation does not come from actions you take. Rather it is through the confession of your mouth and belief in your heart that salvation comes. Only then do the actions of your body and the thoughts in your mind follow. As I said before, you cannot logically come to belief; belief comes first and logic follows.

God gave mankind four thousand years to prove that a person could not achieve righteousness through his own works. When Moses gave his last sermon to the people of Israel before entering the Promised Land, he encouraged them to obey all the laws and commands of the Lord. There was one very important reason for their obedience—their righteousness was contingent upon it. (See Deuteronomy 6:25.) It was an expectation sinful human nature could not fulfill, so Israel lived in a perpetual cycle of sin and sacrifice. (See James 2:10.)

This apparent futility caused Paul to pose the following question:

Romans 7:7 (KJV) What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

The problem was not with the law of Moses, but with mankind. The law was necessary to define the will of God—to define right and wrong—but it did not have the power to deliver mankind from his sinful state. The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote,

Hebrews 7:18-19 (KJV)

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. **19** For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

No matter how diligently the Israelites sought the law of righteousness, they continually fell short.

<p>Romans 10:11 (KJV) For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.</p>	<p>Isaiah 28:16 (KJV) Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.</p>
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Here the author begins to bring the Jew and Gentile into a common salvation. He points out that the scripture says, “he that believeth.” It does not say, “the Jew that believeth,” but it says, “he that believeth.” Anyone that believes can be saved.

Romans 10:12 (KJV) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

That is, the Lord doesn't play favorites. That salvation doesn't come by birth. It does not come by logic. Salvation comes to anyone who believes in their heart and speaks that belief in their mouth.

<p>Romans 10:13 (KJV) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.</p>	<p>Joel 2:32 (KJV) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.</p>
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Notice this reference to the mouth once again. Whosoever calls. Being saved is not a passive action. We do not become saved by passive activity on our part. Rather it is by calling out to him that we are saved. Salvation does not come by being a descendant of Abraham. Salvation does not come by being a Roman citizen. Salvation does not come by being an American citizen. Salvation comes by calling on Him.

Salvation for Others

At this point in the letter, the author switches from salvation for ourselves to a discuss of how we can bring others to salvation.

Romans 10:14-15 (KJV)

14 How 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? **15** And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Isaiah 52:7 (KJV) How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Let me stop here and say that the preacher is not someone who holds a license. I am not at your workplace. You are there. You are the preacher to those people. If you have the Holy Ghost, then you are the preacher that the Lord has sent to those people. The Lord has sent you to that mission field. You were given the special skills, gifts, or talent that put you in that place. You are the missionary to your life.

When you are in that field, do not use logic to speak to people. Logic will not bring someone to believe. Besides, hardly anyone makes logical decisions; people make emotional decisions that they justify with logic.

So, someone may say, "I needed this new car because my old one was costing quite a bit to maintain. The financing is such a good deal." No, most people buy a car because of the way they feel. Because of the way they will feel when their friends see them in that car.

People don't buy insurance because of the actuarial liability of the insurance company; they buy it because that talking gecko is so cute. When the pagan Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved, they first gave him a global answer:

Acts 16:31 (KJV) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

However, after he believed, Paul and Silas “spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway” (Acts 16:32-33). If baptism were not essential to salvation, it is doubtful the apostles would have baptized them given the late hour of the night.

So, the key to saving others is to speak with them. But do not argue logic with them. Engage them on a personal level. Speak from your heart; from your innermost being. Share yourself. It is you – your concern, your love for their soul - who will draw people to Christ.

Romans 10:16-17 (KJV)

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? **17** So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Isaiah 53:1 (KJV) Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

Here the author takes two words from Isaiah, believed and report, to say that hearing is a prerequisite to belief. No one can come to believe without first hearing the word of the Lord. And no one can hear the word of the Lord unless someone who has the word in their own heart speaks it.

Acts 2:38 (KJV) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Because faith is the result of hearing the gospel, it is essential that someone carry this message to the unsaved (Romans 10:14). Since God knows the potential in the heart of every individual, He could scan the earth and take to heaven those whom He chooses. However, He created mankind and gave him a free will, and He offered the plan of salvation to meet mankind’s need for redemption.

God chose to involve mankind in the plan of salvation. Not only does God ask that we choose to serve Him, but He also asks that we take the message of salvation to others. This is evident in the conversion of Cornelius. (See Acts 10.) An angel could just as well have delivered the new-birth message to Cornelius. Although an angel did visit Cornelius, he was not charged to deliver the salvation plan. Instead, the angel directed Cornelius to another human being who would relate God's plan. (See Acts 11:13-14.)

Had Peter not laid down his net and responded to Jesus as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, or had he resisted God's call to take the gospel to the "unclean" Gentiles, Cornelius and his household may have died lost. How many people like Cornelius will die unsaved because someone refused to respond to the call of God to preach the gospel? How many will die lost because a preacher never came to them with the gospel? The church stands commissioned and responsible to a greater number of lost souls today than at any time in the history of mankind. The world needs gospel preachers!

Speak. Hear. Believe.

Faith is the foundation upon which salvation is assured—the foundation upon which sins are remitted. Never having the influence of the oracles of God, the Gentiles were suddenly swept into God's kingdom without following the rituals of the Mosaic law. However, they were not swept into the kingdom of God by the shallow or empty faith expressed by many people today. A person's salvation does not come about simply by his making a statement of belief in a historical Jesus. Rather, he receives salvation by genuine faith in Christ's redemptive work, which he expresses by obeying the Scriptures.

Right standing with God is a result of faith in "the operation of God," or the power of God (Colossians 2:12). This is faith that God will do exactly as He promised. It is putting faith in the operation of God whether one is anticipating remission of sins through water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, healing by calling for the elders of the church and being anointed with oil (James 5:14), or receiving a blessing beyond measure through

tithing (Malachi 3:10). Faith positions the believer to receive the promises of God.

Faith is the common denominator for all people who desire the blessings of God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), but faith in Jesus Christ provides access to the greatest blessing of all—salvation from sins. The birth, life, and atoning death of Jesus Christ destroyed the barrier that once separated Jews and Gentiles and discouraged Gentiles from even attempting to approach God. (See Ephesians 2:14-16.)

It is no longer heritage or ancestry that opens the door to salvation. No longer do animal sacrifices and the keeping of the Sabbath satisfy the demands of the law. Faith has become the common denominator for all mankind, and Jesus Christ is the central focus of that faith. Peter ushered in this New Testament principle when he preached his first sermon:

Acts 2:21 (KJV) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

That which was a stumbling stone to some became a stepping stone to eternal life for others.

Conclusion

As any builder knows, the foundation is the most important part of the building. If the foundation is improperly constructed, the building will not stand no matter how aesthetically pleasing it may be at the time of construction. The Master Builder conveyed this truth when He told the parable of the two builders. The one who built on the sand (a poor foundation) was destined to destruction, while the one who chose to build upon the rock (a good foundation) could withstand the forces that would come against the building. (See Matthew 7:24-27.)

Jesus was the stone that the builders rejected. (See Matthew 21:42.) The Jews in Paul's time could not imagine that they could access righteousness and salvation without some elaborate ceremony. The Galatians were seduced by the same attraction to ritual. Concerning this, Paul cried out,

Galatians 3:1 (KJV) O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Many people today have returned to a priesthood, ornately decorated gowns, candles, and even incense to gain access to God. Others have discarded obedience to the new-birth message and holiness in exchange for a message of only “believing in their hearts” and “confessing with their mouths,” not understanding that they are not mutually exclusive. To forsake any of these doctrines in exchange for a message of only “believe” and “confess” would be an error of grievous proportions.

Faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross is the foundation upon which the church and all its doctrines are built. God has gloriously provided this wonderful plan of redemption that is still available for all people today.