**Believe in Your Heart, Part 1**

**Romans 10:4-13 (ESV)**

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***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.”*

Years ago, when Aaron Schock was a member of the Illinois House of Representatives, he invited me to come and pray for the opening of one of their sessions. I was encouraged by the invitation on a number of levels. But centrally, I was encouraged that the Illinois government still included prayer to God as part of their day, as part of their meetings. Kimberly and I arrived at the State Capitol about 40 minutes early and we were met by some staff who helps with administrative issues. They led us to a little room where they gave us some water and allowed time to gather some thoughts and wait before we were called to the floor to open that session in prayer. They also gave me a little piece of paper and they asked me to read it. It was some instructions that I was to follow that morning. So as I began reading this list of instructions, I was surprised particularly by one paragraph. That sheet of instructions instructed the person praying not to use the name of Jesus in the prayer.

Without question, I would not be able to pray if I didn’t honor the name of Jesus through this public prayer. While someone may rightly argue that we don’t have to say the name “Jesus” in every prayer we pray, the only access we have to God is through Jesus. He is central in every true prayer. And in this setting, not mentioning His name would be a form of denial of His Lordship and a form of betrayal of my faith in Him and my love for Him.

As the time approached for me to pray, Aaron came to greet me personally. I told him about my problem and that I wouldn’t be able to pray without saying the name of Jesus. Aaron was incredulous that instructions like this were given to me and he simply said, “I don’t know who wrote that paper, but this is still America. We still have freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. Pray freely in the name of Jesus as God leads you.” And so that’s what I did. Some in the room were clearly not pleased about that, while several rejoiced. The point of this story is to illustrate that after 2000 years, the name of Jesus stirs controversy and awakens angry reactions.

Franklin Graham tells the story of being asked to pray at the Inauguration of President Bush in 2001. He was talking with another pastor who had been asked as well, to pray at that Inauguration, a pastor by the name of Kirbyjon Caldwell. Pastor Caldwell asked him, “Franklin, are you going to use the Name?” Franklin kind of looked at him quizzically and Pastor Caldwell clarified. “In the prayer, are you going to use the Name?” Franklin now understood the question. He said, “Ah. Yes. I am going to pray in the Name.” Kirbyjon Caldwell replied, “Good. So am I. We’ll both get in trouble together.” (Laughter!)

In Romans 9:33, we discussed this last week, Paul calls Jesus “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” Paul acknowledged that Jesus’ person often generates the heat of hostility and of hatred from those who refuse to submit to His Lordship. That was true in Paul’s day; it’s true in our present day as well. Paul experienced countless times the hatred that came upon him simply because he taught in the name of Jesus in synagogues and in the marketplace throughout his missionary journeys.

Today, when you say the name of Jesus in love and in reverence in a public meeting, you will divide the room. There is no question. You will awaken a response and that response is divided. Jesus today is still a cornerstone for some, and for others, He is a stone of stumbling and He is a rock of offense. I believe that Jesus divides people so, because Jesus claimed to be the only true God and the only way to God. Jesus makes this bold claim that all other ways to God are flat out misguided and wrong and vain. This claim is particularly offensive to the modern man who thinks all roads lead to the same place; that all gods are equally legitimate. In the Bible, God the Father does not set His Son, Jesus, as one of many gods. But He sets Him as LORD of all Lords; the LORD to whom every knee will one day bow.

This morning, we open up our Bibles to Romans 10 to learn more about this Jesus, to draw near to Him, to worship Him. In Romans 10, Paul makes the spiritual burden that he feels for his fellow Israelite plain. He says at the beginning of Romans 10 that he prays passionately for the salvation of his brothers and sisters according to the flesh. He acknowledges that at present, they are outside of the life of God, outside of the grace of God, outside of the redeeming love of God because they have not submitted to Jesus Christ. They thought that they could attain a kind of righteousness that God would accept through their own efforts, through their own labors to obey the Law. And because they were ignorant of God’s righteousness in Christ, they didn’t receive this righteousness as a free gift through Jesus. And that, Paul says, is a fatal error. It is an eternally fatal error.

So now, in Romans 10:4-13, Paul is going to set Jesus forward as the cornerstone to all of the blessings that are offered by God to man. Paul explains four key qualities of Jesus that set Him apart from everyone else, that make Him a cornerstone for all who believe, and that also make Him a rock of offense to those who do not believe. The central idea behind this passage is that God calls all men and women to confess with their mouth and believe in their heart that Jesus is Lord and Savior. So, four key qualities of Jesus. And as is often the case, I’m only going to share two of those qualities this morning, and save two of those qualities for next week.

**Quality #1: Jesus is righteousness to all who believe.**

***4*** *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

What does God mean when He says that Jesus is the “end of the law”? I think there are two ideas that are in view. First, Jesus is the end of the Law in that He completely fulfilled the Law; every part of it, in every way.He perfectly obeyed the moral law of the Old Testament so that He was sinless and without fault. He accomplished everything that the Law required. He also fulfilled the ceremonial law of the Old Testament in that all of the ceremonial law pointed to a future Messiah. And He is that Messiah. So all of that part of the law found its terminus, it’s ending point, in Jesus Christ. And furthermore, He fulfilled the prophetic aspect of the Old Testament law throughHis words and His actions in accomplishing redemption through His sacrificial death upon the cross and through His resurrection.

It was at Jesus’ baptism that God the Father called out from heaven and said

**Matthew 3:17** This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

“He’s accomplished everything I’ve asked for Him to do.” So the end of the law means that Jesus completely fulfills the law. But also, this little phrase means that Jesus is the end of the Law in that now He is the focus of every worshipper of God.

If you are a 1st Century Jew and a Jew living prior to the coming of the Messiah, every day you got up, you would be thinking consciously about the Law of God and doing something throughout your day to be in accordance with it. The Law was the focus. It was the center for you to understand what God is doing and who God is. But when Jesus comes, He is the end of that focus. We don’t wake up in the morning and say, “Boy! I wonder what ceremonies, I wonder what feasts, I wonder what restrictions God has upon my life.” Instead, the believer wakes up and says, “Let me see Christ! If I see Christ clearly, then it is through Him that I am able to be a worshiper of God, who has right standing with God and who lives in communion with God.”

Now, the Law is good, but the Law does not offer us righteousness. That’s why Jesus is the end of the Law. The Law was pointing to Jesus so that He would become the focus. The Apostle Paul speaks to the intention of the Law in Galatians 3.

**Galatians 3:24-26** So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Several other translations read “our tutor.” So think of a little boy having a guardian who is helping him grow into manhood, or a tutor helping him learn about life. The law is our guardian until Christ came. And once Christ came, you don’t need the tutor anymore. You don’t need the guardian anymore because the fulfillment of all that that tutor and all that that guardian was leading you to, has arrived. And so that’s how Christ is the end of the Law. He’s the end of the guardian. He’s the end of the tutor. We don’t need that guardian anymore because we have Christ. Now we have a perfect Guardian in Christ. We no longer sit at the feet of the Law to oversee us in growing in our relationship with God.

One commentator writes, “Instead of the temple it is to be Christ; instead of Moses, Christ; instead of Aaron, Christ; instead of the law, Christ; instead of ceremonies, Christ; instead of worship localized in a building, there is to be the eternal, omnipotent Christ.”

So the idea of Christ being the end of the Law is let us take our eyes off the Law so that we can fix our eyes wholly upon Jesus Christ to provide for us and lead us step by step in our communion with God.

***4*** *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Every word of that sentence is pregnant with theology. Christ is the fulfillment of the Law as well as the focus of worshipers for righteousness, to everyone who believes. Because Jesus is the end of the Law, He is the source of righteousness for every person who believes in Him. We don’t need the Temple in order to be right before God. We don’t need sacrifices to be right with God. We don’t need ceremonies and feasts in order to be right with God. We don’t need the Ten Commandments in order to be right with God. We need Jesus and Jesus alone! He is the fulfillment. He moves in us so that we become obedient. Removing the Law does not cause us to be less zealous in our pursuit of righteous life. But rather, placing Christ causes us to be enabled to pursue righteousness. First, a righteousness as a gift from God, but then righteousness that works in us to transform us into the image of Jesus Himself. Paul talks about this idea in a couple of other passages that I think are key.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If we want to have this righteousness, it’s only going to come through Christ.

**1 Corinthians 1:30** And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

A sinful person can be fully embraced by a holy God only on the basis of this gift of righteousness that Jesus offers us through His perfect sinless life, and through His work of redemption upon the cross. When Jesus died in our place and we become joined to Christ through faith, in union with Him, two transactions take place in our soul as a result of our believing in Jesus.

1. God transfers the sins we have committed onto Christ when He died in our place.

So all the sins are attached to our hearts and God takes them and uproots them from our hearts so that we’re no longer condemned or guilty as a result of those sins, and He lays them upon Christ, and His righteous response of wrath burns into Jesus. He sets the punishment that we deserve for those sins, upon Him.

2. God transfers the goodness and righteousness of Jesus to our souls.

So in Christ, first our soul is completely clean because our sin is removed. But then our soul is granted the wealth of Christ’s righteousness so that God the Father is able to treat us as if we live the kind of life that Jesus lived. That’s remarkable! That frees us of the weight and burden of condemnation and shame and guilt, so that we can rejoice in God our Savior. We don’t have to try to put on those filthy rags of our own righteousness every day to get ourselves ready to stand in the presence of God. Instead, we clothe ourselves with Christ, who is our righteousness. His robes of righteousness are beautiful and lovely and accepted by God the Father.

Now, some applications:

1. Let us stand upon Christ alone every day of our lives.

The Old Testament Jews focused upon that Law. And it’s not that we simply leave a focus on the Law and have a vacuum. No! It’s vital for us to have the same kind of focus on Christ that the Old Testament Jew had upon the Law. If we’re not focused upon Christ, then we are not living in the power of the Spirit. We are not worshiping God. We’re not growing in grace. So let’s stand upon Christ alone every day of our lives. Let us not stand in our own efforts to please God by looking intently at the Law of Moses. That old hymn says:

“My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness…

Dressed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne…

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,”

Friends, every day of our lives, let us root our feet in this solid rock, this cornerstone, saying, “I’m standing consciously and consistently and committedly upon Christ who is my Savior.”

2. Let us live out the promise of righteousness by living in faith.

God’s righteousness granted to us as a gift is not a fictional righteousness. It’s not just simply a piece of paper. It offers us a transformed way of living so that we actually can live in the purity and cleanness and righteousness of Christ as a result of Christ’s work in us through the Holy Spirit, the gift of righteousness in Christ to pursue obedience to God every day. We are not a people who obey God less because we are given righteousness as a gift. Rather, we pursue obedience in freedom and in joy of a restored relationship in a secure love, knowing that Christ will hold us fast. We do not sin more because we are given forgiveness and cleansing and pardon as a gift from God. Rather, we are all the more zealous to put sin to death in our mortal bodies. And so, let’s ask ourselves the question: Do I wake up ready to make war against sin that would attack and muddy my soul, that would distract me from communion with God, that would keep me from glorifying Him?

So the first quality that we think about in regard to Jesus in this passage is that He is our righteousness through faith.

**Quality #2: Jesus is near to us.**

What a precious truth this is! Jesus is so very near to us.

***5*** *For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.*

Paul is continuing his attack upon legalistic religion that believes that righteousness can be obtained through making efforts to obey the Law. And he continues this attack by quoting from Leviticus 18:5. It’s sort of a loose quotation, but that’s where he’s thinking when he talks about Moses writing about this righteousness based upon the Law. Let’s read this passage because it’s important. Now, I’m going to ask you to kind of keep your mind engaged as we think through Paul’s explanation of two Old Testament passages and their impact upon our daily life. First is Leviticus 18. This is what Moses writes. He’s speaking as God’s spokesman, and so God is speaking through Moses. And He says

**Leviticus 18:4-5** You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

Now at first we might think, “Well, wait a minute! Isn’t that saying the opposite of what Paul has been teaching in Romans 10?” Paul anticipates his Jewish friends knowing Leviticus 18 and them countering with this argument that righteousness comes through obedience to the Law. “Didn’t God say if a person does them, he shall live by them, I am the Lord?” Paul says, “Yes. I absolutely agree with Leviticus 18. In fact, I’m going to bring it to you to show you how much I agree with it.” If you or if I perfectly obey all God’s statutes and all God’s rules, we will live. But what Paul has been arguing all along is: Who can do that? Who can perfectly obey all of God’s statutes and all of God’s rules? Not one of us! And if that is the basis upon which we are placing our hope of eternal life, if we don’t keep all of God’s statutes and all of God’s rules, then what does that mean? It means we don’t have life. And so if all of us are in a position that we’ve fallen short of God’s glory, that all of us have sinned, we’ve missed the mark of God’s rules and God’s statutes, we need another place to flee to if we’re ever to find life, if we’re ever to find safety. And Paul says, “That place is Jesus. It was Jesus all along. This is what God had planned.” So our connection to the abundant life that God offers is through not our obedience to God’s law, but through the perfect obedience of God’s Son in our place.

***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);*

Now Paul is moving from Leviticus 18 to Deuteronomy 30. Again, follow with me here. There are some really precious, sweet truths we can glean from this. Paul now loosely quotes from Deuteronomy 30:11-14. We’re going to read that in a moment. It is important to think deeply here or we’re going to lose Paul’s point. And the point is very significant for our day in particular.

In having a zeal for God, the Jews had a zeal, but without knowledge. And without the knowledge of the Gospel, of God’s truth, they were making two fatal mistakes in their pursuit of righteousness or their pursuit of God Himself. First, they were looking to the Law to bring them into right relationship with God. But secondly, and this is what he addresses here, they were looking for more signs and more revelation to bring them into right relationship with God. They were saying, “Maybe if we could get into heaven and bring God down again, just like Moses went up to Mount Sinai and he came down… Maybe if we could have that experience again, then we could have a right relationship with God. Or maybe we can go into the abyss and bring up dead people to life. Maybe then if we experience that, then we would have a right relationship with God.” Both of these errors are in full throttle in the evangelical church. I believe there are vestiges of them in every evangelical church, and that’s why the Word of God is so important to root out poisonous doctrine that will keep us from communion with God and from worship. Let me read to you from Deuteronomy 30 so that you can get the full context.

**Deuteronomy 30:11-14** “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

In other words, God is saying, “I’ve given you a clear word and I’ve blessed you with it as a gift. You don’t have to go back up the mountain to get it. It’s already down here with you. You don’t have to go anywhere to hear the revelation that is sufficient for you to have communion with Me and to worship Me.” If we want to know who God is and what He requires of us, we don’t have to go to some far, distant place to find out. God says, “No. That’s not true for you guys. I’ve given you a gift, and the gift is My Word. It’s My Word that presents life. Man won’t live by bread alone. Man will live by every word that precedes from the mouth of God. And that Word, that bread from heaven that is necessary for us to have eternal life, He says, “It’s not far from you. You don’t have to have some mystical experience and you don’t have to go searching for it in some far place in order to find it. It’s right here. What you need to do instead of looking in all those crazy places for Me, is to start paying attention to what I’ve given you. It’s sufficient for you to have life.” That is the word that Moses has given to the Israelites.

Two ideas are in view in Deuteronomy.

Idea #1: God has given the Israelites enough revelation to understand His requirements and to love Him.

They didn’t need another miracle worker to give them more revelation. Remember that Moses is writing this at a time when he is getting old and is about to depart from them through death. Moses knows that. The people know that. So, the people are understandably anxious about this transition since Moses has been their miracle worker. And they’re asking, “Well, who is the next miracle worker going to be if we’re going to stay in connection with God? He’s been the source of direct revelation from God. He’s the one who ascended into heaven and got revelation of the Law. Who else is going to be this direct line to God for us? Moses says, “Do not look for another miracle worker; not up the mountain, not across the sea. Don’t look for that. God has given you His sufficient Word. You don’t need more miracles. Instead, you need to listen and submit to the Word that He has already given you. It is a sufficient guide to provide everything you need.”

Paul applies this truth more pointedly now that the Messiah, Jesus has come. He says that God has given the final Word, the Messiah, the complete revelation of God to us through Jesus. So don’t look for anyone to follow Him to grant you added revelation. All you need is Christ. If you listen to Christ and look to Christ, you’ll find life in Christ. You don’t need anything else. We do not need more miracles to be close to God. We simply need Christ. That’s the first idea.

Idea #2: God provided His deliverer without any need for them to do something to bring Him to them.

The Israelites didn’t have to ascend into heaven to find their deliverer. How did they get the deliverer, Moses? God sent Moses to them. He rescued Moses in the little basket. Moses then went out into the wilderness. God called Moses through a burning bush and He said, “Go back there.” The Israelites were just laboring away in slavery. They didn’t have to do anything in order to receive a deliverer. So he says, “Don’t think you have to do something or there’s some formula that you can follow that will really connect you to God and you have to really work at it. It’s kind of secret. Few people know it, but if you do this, then you’ll really, really have this amazing relationship with God.” He said, “No. That’s not how it works. What I do as God is I send my deliverer and I sent my deliverer fully in Jesus Christ.”

Paul applies this truth more pointedly now that Jesus the Messiah has come. They did not have to make any effort to bring the Messiah to them. What did the Jews do in order to gain the Messiah? Nothing! They waited. God, in love, sent His Son to them to be their Savior, their Messiah. Paul’s point is the Messiah has already come so there is no longer any need to think about ascending to heaven to bring Him down, or to cross over some sea to find Him. He is here and He is near! The truth that is being presented is we do not need some far-out experience to be close with God. We simply need to embrace Jesus who is already near us. Now, sadly, the Israelites did not listen to Moses. They didn’t listen to any of the other prophets that followed him. They were constantly demanding more miracles from God, more revelation from God in order to be content in Him. They were constantly looking and searching for that supernatural direct engagement with God. Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 12.

**Matthew 12:38-42** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Do you see why Paul is addressing this problem? His heart is burdened for the Jews. He says there’s two problems. They’re seeking after a righteousness according to the law. They’ll never gain righteousness through that. Secondly, they’re seeking for new signs like they need something more, when what they need is right in front of them. Everything they need is right in front of them, right near to them. It’s Christ! He describes the Pharisees. They were trying to sound spiritual, like they have a zeal for God.

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign.” Just let that sink in for a moment. Because there’s a lot of spiritual methodologies that are prevalent in the evangelical church that are seeking for some kind of sign, some direct revelation, some miracle, some experience to exalt, to lift up the spiritual life. Jesus says, “You want a miracle? A miracle is going to happen, and it’s going to be My resurrection. Look at that!” Paul is going to say this exact same thing in verses 8 and 9 of Romans 10. He says “The miracle that you need is the miracle of the resurrection and that’s the only miracle that I’m going to give you because any other miracle would rob my Son of His glory and of His sufficiency.”

Why will the men of Nineveh condemn this generation? Because the men of this generation says, “We need more miracles. We need more revelation.” What revelation did the people of Nineveh have? They didn’t have one miracle. They only had a prophet sent by God who gave them the word, “Repent!” And they repented and God sent grace. What more did they need? He says, “They’re going to rise up to this generation who has the gift of My Son, who has the gift of a completed revelation through My Word, and say, ‘No, we want more.’ And those people are going to rise up and condemn this generation for asking for more.” They had so little. We have so much. They responded! And what happened when they responded to the little that they had? God had mercy upon them. That’s what happened.

Beloved, we do not need another miracle. We do not need another spiritual experience. We need to listen to God’s Incarnate Word and hold fast to God’s written Word. These are sufficient and these are near us. And these are the things that God says, “I will use these for My glory in your life.”

How tempting…I understand it. I’ve gone through seasons in my life where I was tempted by this. How tempting to want some special sign given by God to us directly! But Beloved, this desire is not from God. It is not righteous. Later, in Matthew 16, Jesus is going to repeat this very issue when the Pharisees came and asked Him to show them a sign from heaven again. He’s going to say, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” (Matthew 16:4)

Why do people seek after more revelation, more experiences, more direct connection to God’s power through signs and miracles? The answer God says, “It is not because they are pursuing My glory. It is not because they are people of faith.” Jesus roots this kind of seeking in spiritual adultery. He says it’s adulterous. Think of that! Adulterous! In other words, Jesus is saying this is an unfaithful departure from devotion, contentment and joy in the true God. Our flesh naturally loves a god that appeals to our desire to be intimate and close through supernatural experiences. But this desire is not the same as the righteous desire to be intimate and close to the supernatural God! Do you want to be intimate and close to the supernatural God, content in Him? God says, “The word of faith is not far from you. It’s right here. It’s in My Son. I’ve given it to you. Grab onto it. Stop looking for something way up in the heavens or way across the sea or way down in some abyss. Right here is Jesus, My Son. Believe in Him with all your heart. Confess Him as Lord, and you will be saved.”

My heart aches over this issue because over the course of my life I have had many close friends, many church family members who have gotten caught up in this search for more . . . more miracles, more revelation, more experiences, more of God’s impressive displays of power. The search for more miracles, more personal revelations, more supernatural experiences is a denial of the sufficiency of Christ. That’s what Paul is teaching us. A religion of signs and wonders is a false religion. It is just as false of a religion as a religion of works righteousness. Attaching the name of Jesus to a religion that seeks after more signs does not sanctify it.

Now, does Christ Jesus do miracles today? Yes, He does. Does Christ Jesus give experiences to show His great love and greatness and grace to us? Yes. I believe He does. But, do we need to ascend up some mountain on a quest to find these experiences? No. Absolutely not! Do we need to cross some sea in order to hear the voice of God? No. Absolutely not! Christ is near us and He is enough. If we set our eyes upon Him we will never lack any good thing from the Lord! Let’s read these verses again.

***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);*

Do you need a new revelation or a miracle? No. The word of God is near you. That’s what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 30.

Here is the danger. If you ascend into heaven to bring the Messiah down to you, you likely will have some experience where you feel like you’ve done it. That’s the danger of all false religion. It’s very satisfying at a certain level. If you descend into the abyss to bring the Messiah close to you, you will likely see some supernatural event to convince you that you were successful and this is the way. This is the truth. And that is the reason why God ends “this is the word of faith that we proclaim.” Too many believers have entered this world of supernatural, spectacular, direct revelation, and Paul warns us against these here.

There was a friend of mine in high school who miraculously was saved by God, and I believe we’ll be in heaven together forever. He was very hungry for the Word, but then he went through a crisis. He was growing, growing, growing. He was bold in his witness. He was being used greatly of God, but he went through an emotional crisis. And he told me that one day, he went into this field with his Bible in his hand and he held it to the heavens. And he said, “God, is this all you have given to me? I want more!” And do you know what? He had a supernatural experience. And I’m not going to deny that that supernatural experience was real. I’m going to deny that it was not Gospel. From that moment on, I saw this young man’s influence—and it was great for the Gospel—decrease and not bring people to Christ, because he was seeking to bring people to some experience.

And that’s what happens. Paul is warning us here. This is genuine Christianity. My heart’s desire and prayer for the Israelites is that they would be saved and they’re being distracted by this drive for miracles and signs and wonders to come and stand in their midst. My friend had a zeal for God. It was unquestioning zeal for God, but it was a zeal without knowledge. True knowledge always finds its end and its energy in Christ Jesus. That’s Paul’s point.

***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);*

By the way, the “word of faith” is not a word that comes from redeemed people. What Paul is saying is it’s a word that comes from God. So, this is not a word from man that is produced by man’s faith. But this is a word from God that fuels faith in the hearts of His people. That’s what happens. God gives us His Word. It becomes the word of faith because we believe it and it strengthens our faith as we feast upon it. If we want strong faith, we will not ask for miracles. If we want strong faith, we will feast daily upon the Word God has given us. That’s how our soul gets strong.

***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.”*

Do you see how the center is all Christ? That’s what Paul is leading us to. The center has everything to do with Christ and the miracle that Christ accomplished in His death, His burial, and His resurrection.

What is faith? If we are justified by faith, what is faith? Is faith believing that God will do more physical miracles in our presence? And the answer is, No. God has already performed all the physical miracles necessary for us to commune with Him and to worship Him. And they are all founded in Jesus. He didn’t leave us deficient in access to our worship or communion with Him. Faith is remembering the signs and miracles that God has done to redeem His people! When we do that, our soul becomes healthy. Unbelief is a refusal to be satisfied with the miracle of Jesus’ death and resurrection and the drive, the longing to look for more! Paul is going to say this:

**1 Corinthians 1:22-25** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Any departure from the message of Christ crucified is a departure from the Gospel. It is all centered on Christ. Do you want the wisdom of God? Center your life on Christ. Do you want the power of God? Center your life on Christ. Beloved, this Jesus is near you now! And if you wish the power of God for salvation of your soul, this Jesus is sent by God and He is here. Confess Him with your mouth. Believe upon Him in your heart, and you will have life.

Some closing applications:

1. Be concerned about a lack of zeal for God, but do not be content with a zeal for God that is without knowledge.

There are many also in the evangelical church who just don’t have zeal for God. And others who are seeking for a sign look at that and say, “Well, I don’t want to be like that.” Good! Don’t be like that. If you’re one of those who are seeking after a sign and you look at a lot of apathetic Christians and think the alternative is either seeking after signs with great zeal or being apathetic like that, I’d say I understand. You’re making a choice between two terrible options. But what Paul sets before us is the living Gospel. So be concerned about a lack of zeal for God, but don’t be content with a zeal for God that is without knowledge.

2. Receive the full benefit of the revelation God has given us in Christ to know Him and enjoy Him!

Again, embrace that revelation presently that God has given. It’s not far away. It’s right near every one of us. It’s not accessed by a super-spiritual segment of church. Christ is accessible to every one of us. He’s near every one of us. “Grab onto Him,” Paul is saying.

3. Make much of Jesus every day.

He is our reward. He is our righteousness. He is our nearness. He is our Lord and Savior. Become Christ-saturated and you will never want for the thrill of participating in God’s glory.

4. When you open your Bibles in the morning, seek communion with God through Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is not primarily a book of information to grow our minds. But the Bible is primarily a book of revelation to grow our relationship with God so that we would be near Him, that we would love Him, that we would be zealous for Him, that we would give our lives for Him. Christ is enough!

Christ is my reward

And all of my devotion

Now there’s nothing in this world

That could ever satisfy

Through every trial

My soul will sing

No turning back

I’ve been set free

Christ is enough for me

Christ is enough for me

Everything I need is in You

Everything I need

Christ my all in all

The joy of my salvation

And this hope will never fail

Heaven is our home

Through every storm

My soul will sing

Jesus is here

To God be the glory

I have decided to follow Jesus

No turning back

No turning back

The cross before me

The world behind me

No turning back

No turning back

Christ is enough for me!