

Psalms: 407:1-3 325:1,2,4 60:1-5 82:1-3 427:1,6
Romans 10:1-13

Dear Congregation,

There is nothing more beautiful than to be saved! May God's Spirit open my mouth and your heart as we consider this pearl of the greatest value from Romans 10. Let's first consider briefly the setting of this chapter.

Paul is writing to the Roman believers. In the previous chapters he has written about the glory of salvation and the promises of God to all His people. But there is a nagging doubt eating at the root of the believers' comfort. The doubt is regarding the question, "Can we fully trust God to keep His promises?" Now why would anyone ever have such a doubt?

To explain the reason for this doubt, let us consider another question first. Children, how do you know that you can trust someone? You see that the person is caring, loving, honest but above all trust-worthy. They have proven themselves. They have kept their word and backed it up with their actions. Imagine someone makes you a promise and then fails to fulfil it. If this happens regularly, you learn that you can't trust this person's words any more.

The people that Paul was writing to in the book of Romans had a similar problem. It was not "Can we trust Paul?" but "Can we trust God to keep His promises to save us; to deliver us from wrath and to bring us to His heaven?" Why would they doubt that? The reason they did is because it appeared that God was failing to keep His promises to His people Israel. At the time Paul wrote this letter, it appeared that God had abandoned His people Israel as He was turning to the Gentiles and saving them. Many Jews were lost and soon the whole nation disappeared as the Romans murdered millions, destroyed the city Jerusalem and scattered what remained of the Jews.

To answer these doubts and questions, God inspired Paul to write Romans 9, 10 and 11. In short, these three chapters in Romans are God's answer to the nagging doubt. First Paul showed from the Old Testament that what was happening among the Jews was prophesied by God. He was keeping His Word and fulfilling every detail of it. He had prophesied He was going to turn away from Israel when they would reject Him and instead He would turn to the Gentiles. Let's read the last verses in chapter 10: "I was found of them that sought Me not." That meant the Gentiles including the Romans. Verse 21 says "But the nation that I called and to whom I stretched out my hands all day, are a disobedient and gainsaying people." Gainsaying means resisting or opposing. So Paul proves that God already told them in the Old Testament days that He was going to forsake them for their wicked unbelief and put them away for a while.

Gladly in Romans 11, Paul is given to prophesy about the future. God reveals to his servant that the rejection of and judgment on the Jews is not final. God will visit His covenant people of old again. But that subject falls outside the message we are to consider in Romans 10.

Let's look more closely at Romans 10, the first 13 verses. These verses speak about God's Salvation. Let's consider two questions, First, what is salvation? Second, How do I receive this salvation?

1. What is salvation?

If you are young, you don't always realize how bad our world really is. Even though *your* day may be great, for many other children and adults, the day is very difficult. Compare it to the weather. While you have a beautiful day with blue skies and lovely temperature, others may experience a devastating tornado or blistering heat or frigid cold.

So it is with many other things. You may experience love; others long for one touch or word of love. You may live in a family where dad and mum are loving and faithful; others feel the pain of being torn in their loyalty to parents who are not faithful or loving.

The point I want to make is that behind the faces of people exists a world which isn't pretty, pure and peaceful. We have hearts that are selfish, covetous, jealous, evil, proud and deceitful. Within us exists a fountain that always bubbles up streams of sin which bring endless misery. A British newspaper once posted the question, "What is wrong with the world today?" Among the many submitted answers was one that was very short but spot on. The person answered that question with, "I am."

That's exactly what God tells us in Romans 3. "There is none righteous, no not one." (Romans 3:10) "There is none that doeth good, no not one" (Romans 3:12). Within we are all a fallen, rebellious and evil world. We can pretend not to be, we can dress it up nicely, we can cover it beautifully and we can try to subdue it but, friends, there is a volcano inside. It just takes one small thing to explode! If that happens, out flow words that are cutting, looks that are destroying and thoughts or imaginations we don't even want to share. These are the problems in our hearts. You and I are these worlds of evil.

In verse 1 of our chapter, Paul shares his upright desire that his fellow Jews might be saved. The word "saved" means "to make whole or to heal." As you can see, Paul uses this word 'saved' or 'salvation' often in this chapter: in verses 9 and 10, and again in verse 13.

To be saved is to be set free. There is nothing more beautiful than being free from sin, free from the desires of your sinful heart, free from the bondage of your own heart and free from the crushing truth of your guilt against a holy and just God. As fallen rebels, we are no longer free as we used to be even though we all imagine we are. We are slaves of the worst slave-driver: our own sinful and depraved nature drives us on! In one sermon Jesus made that clear, when He taught, "If ye continue in My word, then ye are My disciples indeed and ye shall know the truth" (John 8:31, 32). Then He proceeds to say that knowing the truth is going to make you free. Knowing the truth that is in Me, the Lord Jesus. Knowing what I teach about God, about yourself, about Myself, about how you can be saved through Me, that alone is going to make you free from the bondage to your sin!

It is so beautiful to be free. To no longer be a slave to yourself. To be free from enslaving power of sin is so wonderful. You and I are captive to Satan, self, and sin and temptation. These three bring untold misery in our life.

Where God's grace is at work, you begin to see how bound you are in the power of these three! Are you learning to see this? Do you see how you are always driven with this selfish, sin-seeking, worldly outlook. You thirst for the nicest gadgets of this world. You want the best. You strive to be the biggest. You never feel truly satisfied because you can never have it all. Therefore Jesus proclaims to us, "Knowing me and what I am teaching and what I have done is going to make you free. To know My Father and Me Whom He has sent, that is eternal life." Salvation is to be free.

Now the second thing about salvation is restoration of relationship. To be freed or delivered from the bondage of prison is wonderful. But many prisoners who walk out of prison still face another reality: they are not yet home, or perhaps they have no home. In other words, their relationship to loved ones may still be broken. Paul taught that to be saved also means to have the relationship with God restored. In chapter 5 he wrote, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Peace with God, friends, means that God is my Father! and that I am restored to Him! That's peace with God. That is the restoration of a relationship so precious and so beautiful. Even though we are still in the fallen world with many things to disturb

us, Paul says that if we have this saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and we are indeed trusting in Him, we have peace with God. Is there anything more beautiful than to be able to walk out in nature and to know that the Creator of all that remaining beauty is your Father? And that everything between you and that Father is now good? How beautiful, satisfying, and strengthening it is to have peace with God against whom we rebelled and from whom we separated ourselves in our Fall in Adam. This peace is indescribable. This peace includes forgiveness of all my past. It includes knowing that everything that I ever did that was wrong, filthy, gross, bad and sinful is put away as far as the east is from the west. This peace includes knowing that I am accepted with Him even though I am still a failure in living to God's glory from morning to night. It includes knowing that the Father looks upon me as if I have never done a single sin. That's the Gospel message to all who have learned to repent and trust in Jesus Christ!

Peace with God means that our holy and just God looks upon the believer as un-blameable and un-reprovable and holy in His sight even though they feel blameworthy, reprovable and unholy in all aspects of their living. Believers in Christ are saved because they are complete and accepted in the Beloved. This is the portion of every believer no matter how small or weak their faith is. How astoundingly beautiful is salvation!

Besides the freeing, the restoration of the relationship, the removal of guilt, salvation also includes the total renewal of the heart: my thinking, my will, my understanding and my feelings will all be perfected by the God of grace. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new." Isn't that also a beautiful aspect of salvation? The final completion of this work of salvation is not till the future. John on Patmos saw in a vision the final future of all God's children. In Revelation 21 he saw new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. He saw a new earth and into this a city coming down with all of the pearly streets, golden gates and the glory of God. Now what or who is pictured in that city? That city is the future of God's redeemed and completely restored or sanctified people. Those are the people that God saved out of this world, transformed, changed them, made them perfect, and He is going to bring them into the renewed world and they are all going to be as gold. Each of their characters will be as a beautiful pearl; they are all going to be holy and filled to perfection with the fruit of the Spirit; they are all going to be living together in this massively beautiful, restored world of love. That is salvation complete. All darkness, sadness, brokenness, and separation will be forever past because sin will be banished. Oh, what a glory is the salvation God promises in His holy Gospel! That is something to look forward to. God's children ought to be looking forward far more to that as they struggle through this life.

Hearing this, what does that mean for you? I know we all want to be happy. You crave to be loved and accepted. You wish for security and fulfilment. We all want to feel better. You agree, don't you? Everyone is fighting a battle to somehow find true happiness. The younger son in Jesus' parable thought, "Forget about all these house rules. I'm going to live in the world, to seek my happiness out there." He didn't find it. The older brother said, "Not me; I am not going out in the world and break all the rules. I am going to be happy in keeping the rules." He didn't find it either. The one who stayed home was not less lost than the one who was seeking his happiness abroad. They were both lost. In the end the younger one was saved but Jesus the parable leaves us with the older one still lost. This brings us back to Romans 10. The Jews, Paul's nation, had in general a praiseworthy zeal. They were so hard-working trying to live good lives, like the older brother. They had a zeal to be saved and a zeal toward God but not according to knowledge. That means they were trying to be saved but not according to the teaching of Jesus. They wanted to be saved according to their own insights, convictions and efforts.

Well friends, that brings us to the second main thought, **How do I receive this salvation?**

We can also put this question like, “How can I be saved?” This is one of the most vital questions to be busy with. In the first place, you will not find salvation in being religious. Look at the first five verses of this chapter. Paul knows the Israelites. He knows they are sincerely doing what they believe is right. He sees they have an incredible zeal toward God. They are so sincere in their religion but are completely wrong. They are ignorant of how to be saved; ignorant of the Gospel truth. Most of them were nice people. Good church going, moral, well-behaved people. Think of men like Nicodemus and the rich young ruler. But Paul points out that this is a dead-end street. You won't find salvation in being religious. Some of us are not going to like this. Going to church, reading your Bible, praying lots, being good, keeping the rules, walking in the Lord's way is never going to make you find this happiness. Then the Jews would have found it. Paul himself is an ex-Pharisee. He knows what he's writing about. He says he never found it there. These Jews worked very hard on themselves, forcing themselves to do and not-to-do. Why did they work so hard? They did this to please God and to win or earn His favour.

You must examine your own thinking: Why are you religious? Why do you live like a Christian? Why do you deny yourself, get up early today to come to church and live like all good Christians ought to live? Is part of your answer, “I want to please God to win His favour. I do this because it will help me to be saved. For how could I ever hope to be saved if I don't live a good life?” If that is your thinking than I need to awaken you from your dream. You are never going to win God's favour or grace or forgiveness that way. Understand what you're trying to do! You are trying to work hard and somehow secretly think to obligate God to give you salvation. That's what the older brother was doing, right? He said to his father, “I have worked hard and you never gave me a kid to have a feast. I do not understand, I am so angry, for this fellow who lived in the world, spent all your goods with harlots and lived like a pig, yet you give him your best calf and treat him as if he is your best son.” He could not accept the amazing grace his father showed to his younger brother.

You see, the older son is like these Jews who had zeal but were trying to manipulate God with their zeal. Such seek to *buy* salvation.

Friends, that thinking has not died yet. Look closely at your own thinking this morning. Are you trying to manipulate God into being merciful and gracious to you by your zeal? You'll never find salvation that way. Why not? Look at verses 3 to 5. It is because you don't understand God's righteousness. You don't understand God's holy standard. You don't understand that God's standard is perfection. Everything that is not *perfection* will not bring you life. Look at verse 5 - “Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.” Only the person who perfectly obeys the law of God shall live by them. Can you? Do you? Are even your best efforts coming even close to that? I hope you say, “No, not even close, but I'm still trying.” Well, this morning I will counsel you to give up trying, for it is hopeless. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Haggai asked the question, “When an unclean man touches anything that is clean, like a perfect lamb, will that make him clean?” The answer is no. Instead when an unclean hand touches something clean, it became *unclean*. So it is with you and me. All we do, no matter how sincere or how diligent, is defiled by our uncleanness no matter how good our intentions are.

Hear the answer and direction God gives this morning. Stop trying to work your way up to heaven by your works for you will never find it in that way friends. All our lifelong diligent efforts to be good and kind or to incline God's heart or lessen our guilt, will all fall short.

You also will not find it far away. We do not have to go very far this morning to find it. Look at verses 6 and 7. We do not have to ascend into heaven to find it. We don't have to go deep down in the earth to find it. Paul is here borrowing words from Moses in Deuteronomy who is saying to the people of Israel, “Look, this law that I published has *come* to you. You don't have to go across the

ocean to find it. You do not have to go into heaven to find it. It has come to you.” Paul says, “Now look, that word I am bringing to you, is the Gospel.” We do not have to go as far as the Queen of Sheba, do we? The King has come to us. We do not have to travel that far. The word is nigh to you, verse 8, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach.” I know we would feel better to have to travel across the world to find it. We would love to contribute something to our own salvation for it would give us some validation. But no, friends, we don't have to go anywhere to find this salvation. You have to realize it is brought to you, only to be *received* without price, without your merit.

As God's ambassadors we are commissioned to preach to you this Word of Christ. We hold in our hand the Living Word of the Almighty Sovereign. In this Word God speaks to us about our sin and rebellion but also proclaims to us rebels His peace and pardon to any who will repent from his or her sins. Ponder often on the amazing goodness of this long-suffering God who desires not the death of the wicked, though everyone is worthy of it.

The Almighty is good and gracious but He will also display the glory of His anger toward those who refuse Him. Listen to what He said about the Jews and in that to all who hear His Gospel message, “I stretch out My hands to a disobedient, slow to obey, gainsaying people”. He did this to the Jews for centuries. And He has not stopped doing that yet. This morning, this ambassador of Christ is bringing you the message of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, as good and glad tidings for the greatest of rebels. Notice how Paul refers to this in verse 20 of 2Corinthians 5, “as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God.” What a revelation of God's heart! Friends, this word comes so near to you this morning!

You say, “What must I do then? Let's consider that after we sing. Let's sing Psalter 82:1-3.

How must I obtain such salvation? The answer to this question is the most bewildering aspect of the Gospel message. It goes completely against all our reasoning. It is simply by receiving it. It doesn't make sense that God, after such offences against every aspect of His divine Being, offers us complete restoration and salvation upon the terms, ‘repent of your sins and receive My forgiveness’. The Gospel remedy is the simplest cure but it cost God the infinite price of His beloved and only Son.

Salvation is so difficult because it is so simple. I grew up hearing this statement without understanding it. We all have the same problem that Naaman had. You remember this Assyrian general. He was a leper. Nothing mattered any more to him but to be cured of this fatal disease. In God's gracious providence He was brought to Israel. At the king's palace he only meets distress. So he goes on to the prophet Elisha's house and there he gets to hear the staggering remedy: “Wash yourself seven times in the waters of the Jordan.” But he didn't want to do that at all. This remedy was simply unacceptable. He fumed in anger about his own rivers as much better than that pitiful little Jordan which at that time of the year may have been a shallow creek. Finally Naaman's servants prevailed as God's Spirit used them to convince Naaman to wash in the Jordan River. He humbled himself, stripped off his royal clothes and dipped himself into the water of the Jordan seven times. He came out healed, the leprosy completely gone. No easier and better cure was ever found in the world.

What is the application of this for you and me? How can I be saved? God answers us, “All I require is that you turn away from trying to save yourself, denounce your own righteousness or merits and acknowledge your sins. Despite your terrible deeds of rebelling against Me and destroying My glory in your deep fall, all I'm calling you to do is trust in Me for your salvation.” Jesus speaks these words to us this day, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give

you rest” (Matthew 11:28). “Commit your burden, your impossible dilemma to Me. Trust Me as the God-given Mediator to cover your guilt against the all-holy God. Hide yourself in My righteousness. Cease from your own labour. Trust My labour and My heavy burdened life and death for it is through this that I have provided the only way of salvation for the chief of sinners.”

I'll never forget a dear brother who saw the light in this Gospel. I ministered the Word for years to him. But to no avail. Doubts, fears and darkness prevailed. Well, half a year or so before he died, I came into his house for a visit and I saw him smiling. There was a shine on his face. I asked, “What happened to you?” He said, “Pastor, it is so easy to be saved.” I looked at him and said, “What? I would never expect to hear that out of your mouth. Tell me, what happened?” Then he opened the Scriptures to Romans 10 and said, “If I believe with my heart in the truth of the crucified Saviour and Him being resurrected by the Father as the proof that all of His labour was accepted, and confess this with my mouth, I shall be saved.” I was stunned and amazed with joy. We thanked God together for revealing to him what had been so hidden to him for many years. Before he looked for the hope in his own heart, and feelings, and experiences, but always saw in himself the shortcomings and he was so hindered by this.

You see, congregation, we make salvation so hard. God doesn't. *We* do. And the reason we make it so hard is because we do not want to leave the covenant of works. It is baked in us and we feel comfortable in that covenant. But this is really foolish. We want to work and work and to do and to be this and to be that, and *then* we'll come to God and say, “Now look, Lord, at least I've tried.” But God says, “Yes, I have seen your zeal and your best efforts and accomplishments but they are all as filthy rags.”

The Scripture tells us that we are to submit ourselves to God's method of grace. Look at verse 3 again, “For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Now that is a big and a difficult verse. Let me use an illustration to explain this. Consider that Jesus Christ is God's bridge by which He can come to us as well as we can only come to Him. God is infinitely high and holy which is like huge chasm between Him and us. We are on the other side of the great chasm, unable to return and overcome the barrier. We are dead to all spiritual good, guilty, in prison due to God's righteous curse and even *unwilling* to be saved.

Yet the great and good God provided in His Son Jesus the only and sure Bridge between Him and us. Scripture uses the word Mediator to describe Jesus Christ. God says, “The only way that you and I can come together is if you return over My bridge to Me.” We say, “No Lord, we have our own bridge. We're working on it at least. I will establish my righteousness. I will do my best to be better. I am going to live my life and I will do it so well and finally, I will reach the other side and Thou will accept me.”

You say, “I do not think that way.” But I know that you and I *do* think that way. Check your thinking. Let me illustrate. When do you have more hope of being saved? “Well, when I can really pray well and I feel that my heart is in the right place, and I feel like I'm convicted and humble and can actually weep over my sin instead of having dry eyes.” Did you hear what you just said? You only listed things about yourself and when you find these in you, you have more hope.

I grant you have a great zeal but you are still being ignorant of God's way of salvation. You are trying to establish your own righteousness, my friend. We know the doctrines so well. We hold the confessions of God's truth. But practically, we don't think and believe what we know. So many of us are still thinking, “If only I could...” And you fill in the blank. “No, it will not save me but it will help me.” What will help you? “Well, if I only feel more humble or whatever, it will help me.” No, it's not going to help you. It's going to condemn you even more because all you are and do and bring

before God is filthy. It is gold-covered sin. It's not going to help you at all. Be convinced, friends, our best works are filthy, unacceptable before God. At any time that you and I look to any kind of merit, whatever you want to call it: it could be works, it could be feelings, it could be fitness, it could be sincerity... any time you look at any kind of merit, you are trying to create your own bridge to God and walk on it. There is nothing more offensive to God! As if His Bridge or Mediator isn't good enough!

Salvation is *received*, then, not *obtained* or earned. Salvation is received by faith. It is received when God enables us to use the bridge of Jesus Christ. As Paul put it, "Not having my own righteousness or merits but to be found in Him, the Lord Jesus." Is the Spirit of God taking away your hope in your own righteousness? Is He taking you off the sandy foundations of *your* good effort? Is He inclining your heart to be saved by grace and grace alone? Oh, if such changes are taking place in your heart, the greatest miracle in the world is witnessed within you! To get a man to consent to be saved by grace or to walk on God's Bridge, is the fruit of a power greater than what made the world out of nothing! For no man comes unto Christ except the Father draws him or her!

To get back to the Scriptural words, Paul called it "submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God." Let's look at that phrase again. What does he mean here with the righteousness of God? You and I need to be righteous. We need to *be* good and *do* good. That's righteousness. In order to be accepted with God, we have to be perfect, we have to be right, we have to do right always and everywhere, all our life, while we are asleep and while we are awake. Since our fall, this is impossible. Therefore, God brought His own righteousness in Jesus Christ, His Son, into the world, to live here as a human, in the likeness of human flesh. He lived here. He worked here. He suffered here. He died here. He was finally raised from the grave. And in Him, in His life and in His death is the righteousness of God provided that you and I needed to bring before God but are never able to bring.

But the Jews said, "No way. We'll make our own righteousness." And the older brother said, "I worked hard and I don't get anything." Naaman says, "No Jordan. I'll go back to Damascus. They've got better rivers there." What do you say?

Friends, this morning Jesus Christ calls you through His Word, "Look unto Me!" What will you say? Will you submit? God is calling you and may the Spirit of God prevail upon you this morning. Faith in God's method of salvation through the perfect work of Christ is like stepping off your shore onto His bridge. What is your shore? That is looking at yourself, your righteousness, your works. He calls you to repent of that. He calls you to forsake living in the land of self-righteousness. And He is calling you to trust Him, to confess Him as the only way back to God, the only way of reconciliation. Look at verse 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." God is asking, "Will you believe Me? Will you believe that the only way that you and I can be brought back together is through Jesus Christ? Will you reject any other method, any other works, any other righteousness and receive my Son as the only Bridge and Mediator?"

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." God is asking that you would tell Him something, or rather *confess* something. Too many of you do not do that. You go home and *think* about the sermon you heard but do not *obey* or answer the call of the Word of the Gospel.

What are you saying in your heart? Are we confessing what all His people have learned to confess, "Lord, I see that everything in me is totally unworthy. There is nothing in me that makes me acceptable and, Lord, I forsake it all. I throw it away; I renounce it. I don't want to make mention of it any more before Thy face but I see, O God, that in Thy Son is my hope, my righteousness, my

salvation. In Him who came to this earth to live and to die and whom Thou raised from the dead as the guarantee that everything He did was perfect. I submit, Lord, to this wonderful provision. Lord, I'll take off my reformed coat and I'll take off all my good life and I will be just naked before Thee and I will go into Thy Jordan River, the atoning blood of Christ. I will entrust myself to Thee as the only Saviour. I am well pleased with Him as Thou art well-pleased with Him. Thou tells me to hear Thee and Lord, I hear. In Thee do I put my trust or take my refuge.”

God does not want fakeness or mere outward imitation. He doesn't want you to just repeat what *I* said. There's plenty of that. He wants your heart. What I believe in my heart needs to be confessed with my mouth.

What is the promise? It is so hard to believe, but the promise is complete salvation! That includes everything we poor and needy sinners need and can never provide: forgiveness of all sin, righteousness to make us righteous in God's sight, reconciliation and acceptance in the eyes of the holy and just God, adoption as children of the Most High; eternal glory hereafter.

But the Father wants to hear an echo of His own words from your mouth and heart, friends. You know what the Father says from heaven, right? “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Do you know what He wants to hear from you? “Father, I am also well pleased in Him alone.” He wants to hear that out of *your* mouth and heart.

Maybe you say, “If I would be a better person, then there would be more hope. If I only were more loving; *really* loving God from the heart and *really* sincere, *then* there would be hope.” No! That's wrong. Then you're in the wrong church, then you need to go to one of the many self-help religions that are around us. There you get saved by works and feelings and doings, but that is no Gospel. Friends, you are ignorant and blind to the truth that nothing of us and nothing *in* us and nothing *by* us makes us acceptable to God. Your condition, no matter how good it is, is still grounds for condemnation because your Maker sees deeper than the outside and sees you are a child of Adam. There is never in us a single reason to hope in what we feel and do and what we experience. I urge you, do not look there to find your hope. The hope is in what God brought into this world, what He gave in His Son, how He raised Him from the dead and has ascended into heaven. God is not in the trading business. “Dear Lord, I do this for Thee, and hopefully I am impressing Thee enough to trade it for Thy grace.” No, instead *this* is what God speaks: “Behold I stand at the door and knock, and I offer to you gold tried in the fire. Jesus tried on the cross, proven to be gold in the resurrection day. I offer you garments of salvation to clothe every blemish of your character, of your life, of your past, of your present. I even offer you the eye salve to cure your blind eyes. Come unto Me all ye that are labouring to be better, to get saved. Come unto Me and I will save you.” That's His promise. That is the only ground of hope.

“But I don't dare to trust it. I don't dare to trust in that promise because I'm not convicted enough.” Did you hear what you said? What is enough conviction? Enough conviction doesn't mean to lay awake for nights. The lost in hell are always awake. True and saving conviction of sin is the Spirit's work to make someone despair of saving himself and will lead him or her to the feet of the blessed Lord and Mediator. Friends, if you are convicted in the experiential struggle of, “I cannot change myself. I'm trying. But my case is hopeless and I am helpless and besides, I am condemned.” You feel despair because you get up every morning with the same sins and the same issues and you're looking back and you see all the same issues and you're despairing in your mind. If God is humbling your heart and making you acknowledge that you are not worthy that He would call you a son or daughter; if God is teaching you to accept His side against yourself ... then you are convicted of sin. When we loathe sin in ourselves as well as in others, you are convicted of the evil of sin.

But don't think that conviction of sin is a green light that allows you to trust in God's promise or to come to the Lord Jesus. No, no. Conviction of sin is a *red* light telling you there is danger and that you are to flee! It is not a green light that gives permission. Conviction of sin is sent in your heart to convince you to flee and to make the state of your soul priority above all else.

When someone is thirsty, they will seek water. Without being thirsty, you will not ask for water. But being thirsty is not the permission to drink. Do you follow that? Too many of us think that. "Oh, I need first to be more deeply convicted and then I have permission to drink the Gospel." No. You'll drink more if you are more thirsty. The permission to drink of this Gospel is there because God calls you, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

"But I'm not troubled about my sin." Well, shame on you. Do you know what sin is? It's offending God. It is slapping the Lord's glory. It is saying, "God, I don't want Thee." Sin is a horrible rebellion against the most glorious Being. If you are not humbled and convicted about sin then you are in a terrible condition. You need to repent of thinking about yourself as if you are not too bad. "But how do I become repentant?" There is One who is able to save you of your own thinking and that's Jesus Christ. He is exalted to be the Prince and Saviour to *give repentance*. (Acts 5:31) Take that word, friends and humble yourself at Christ's feet today. "Lord, thou has been exalted to give repentance. I need repentance, Lord. My heart is hard and cold and stony." Go to God with it.

Lastly, you say, "I am doubting what God has promised to those who trust in Him." And I can see that because that is a great thing. When God declares in this chapter that those who truly trust in Him are saved, this is almost impossible to believe. "But how can I believe that?" Oh friends, because the Bible says so! "Yes, but my faith is so small. I am just a trembling believer. I can hardly believe it." That's our problem indeed. But learn this: it is not *strong* faith or *weak* faith that saves, it is *true* faith that saves no matter how small. The trembling hand and the refuge-taking faith justifies exactly in the same way. I can crawl over that bridge on my hands and knees, centimetre by centimetre, fearful and with imperfect faith, *or* I can *walk* over that bridge embracing Him Whom God has given. You see, the manner of faith, or the degree of faith, or the weakness of faith, doesn't ultimately make a difference in the matter of salvation. It does affect the *assurance* of salvation.

But the promise is still true that all those that call upon the name of God with this desire and confession of their heart, they shall be saved. We are reminded of that promise in verse 11, "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." That means He will not put to shame those that put their trust in Him. He will not let you down.

You say, "Ah, that's all beautiful but I'm standing so far off. I am so empty, so cold, so hard." I've got one more word for you, from verse 12, "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." What does that word "rich" mean? That means He is fully supplied with everything needed to save a sinner like you. What a beautiful word this morning! As it says in verse 15: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!— of God's grace. Amen.

Closing Psalter 427:1, 6