

Salvation

Romans 10:1-13

Psalter 407

The Ten Commandments

Psalter 325:1,2,4

Romans 10:1-13

Psalter 60:1-5

Psalter 82:1-3

Psalter 427:1,6

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 know that seeing 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 anymore.

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 whatever 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 prophesied He was going to turn away from Israel when they would reject Him and He would be turning to the Gentiles. Let's read the last verses in chapter 10: *I was found of them that sought Me not.* Those are the Gentiles including the Romans. "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 hunger for one touch or word of love. You may live in a family where dad and mom 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 miniature fallen, rebellious and evil world. Now 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 in here. 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 miniature worlds of evil.

"But your first thought was going to be about salvation?" That's right, I will come to that, but you can only clearly see the beauty of white if you hold it against the background of black. If our sinful condition is the darkest black, then salvation is the purest white. So let's not consider salvation and saved.

In verse 1 of our chapter, Paul shares his upright desire that his Jewish brethren 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 more 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 only 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. In World War Two there were the S.S.-ers. If you are captive to them, you are in bad hands. But you and I are captive to spiritual S.S.-ers: Satan, self and satin. These three bring untold misery in our life. With 'satin' I mean the world of sin and temptation.

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, satin outlook. You thirst for the nicest gadgets of this world. You want the best. You strive to be the biggest. You feel never 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 freed.

Now the second thing of 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 face outside the prison 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. Now 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 and you 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 once 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 unblameable and unreprouvable and holy in His sight even though they feel blameworthy, reprobable 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 astounding beautiful is salvation! Besides the freeing, the restoration of the relationship, the removal of guilt, it also includes the total renewal of the heart: my 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 sees in a vision the final future of all God's children. In Revelation 21 he saw new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven on earth. 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 is right in that city. 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's 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, 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 do to you? I know that we all want to be happy. You crave to be loved and accepted. You wish for security and fulfillment. We all want to feel better.

You don't disagree on that, do you? Everyone is fighting a battle to somehow find true happiness. The younger son in the parable of Jesus thought, "Forget about all of these house rules. I'm going to live in the world, to seek my happiness out there." He didn't find any of it. But the older one said, "Not me; I am not going to go out in the world and break all the rules. I am going to be happy in keeping the rules." Neither one of them found it. The one who stayed home was not less lost than the one who was seeking his happiness abroad. They were both lost. The one sought his happiness in the world, doing his own thing. The other sought it in being religious, living by all the house rules. In the end, however, 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, have in general a praiseworthy zeal. They are so hard-working in trying to live good lives, like the older brother. They had a zeal to be saved and zeal to 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 and 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 his brethren, the Israelites. He knows they are sincerely doing what they believe is right. He sees they have an incredible zeal of 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 young rich ruler. But Paul points out that this is a dead-end street. You won't find salvation in being religious. Now 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. The Jews would have found it then. Paul himself is an ex-Pharisee. He knows what he's writing about. He says he never found it there. Being religious is not going to make us happy. Indeed, these Jewish brethren worked very hard on themselves, forcing themselves to do and not-to-do. Why did they actually work so hard? They did this to please God and to win or earn His favor.

Now, you examine your own thinking: Why are you religious? Why do you live like a Christian? Why do you deny yourself, get up early on this day, 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 favor. 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 then I need to awaken you from your dream. You are never going to win God's favor or grace or forgiveness that way. You are having a good zeal but not according to knowledge. You are actually trying

to make God serve *you* by working hard and being religious. 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 elder brother was doing, right? He said to his father, "I have worked hard and you never gave me a kid to have a feast." He could not accept the amazing grace his father showed to his younger son, who was a terrible partyer and ungodly son. "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, you give him your best calf and treat him as if he is your best son."

You see, the older son is like these Jews who have a zeal but they are trying to manipulate God with their zeal. Such seek to buy salvation.

Friends, that thinking has not died yet. You 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? Well, look at verses 3 through 5. Why will you never find salvation that way? It is because you're ignorant. You don't understand. 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 to that 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, how diligent is defiled by our uncleanness no matter how good our intentions were or 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 not find it in that way. Never will you find it in this way, friends. All our lifelong diligent efforts to be good, well and kind or to incline God's heart or lessen our guilt, will all fall short.

You will not find it either 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 in Israel, "Look, this law that I published to you 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 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 infinite times 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 again this morning to a disobedient, slow to obey, gainsaying people" as He did 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 gladdest tidings for the greatest of rebels. Notice how Paul refers to this in verse 20 of 2Corinthians 5, "And I must beseech you in Christ's name as if God beseeches you." I never am able to come to the bottom of that revelation of God's heart in this verse, *as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God.* 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 which yet 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. I found it hard and difficult to understand and later even more impossible to believe. For we all have the same problem that Naaman had. You remember this Assyrian four star general. He was a leper. Nothing mattered anymore to him but to be cured of this killing disease. In God's gracious providence He is brought to Israel. At the king's address 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 fury about his own rivers as 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'm requiring is that you turn away from trying to save yourself, denounce your own righteousness or merits and acknowledge your sins. Yet 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 merits or righteousness. Cease from your own labor. 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 the dear brother who saw the light in this Gospel. I was thinking of him as we sang, *Then set me free from the snare which foes for me, with wicked art, did secretly prepare*. I ministered the Word for years to this brother. But to no avail. Doubts, fears and darkness prevailed. Well, half a year or maybe three months before he died, I came into his house for a pastoral 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 I said, "What? I would never expect to hear that out of your mouth." I said, "Tell me, what did the Lord reveal to you?" Then he opened the Scriptures to Romans 10 and said, "If I believe with my heart in the truth of the crucified Savior and Him being resurrected by the Father as the proof that all of His labor 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 remained so hidden to him for many years. Before he was always measuring himself to others who displayed the salvation of the Lord but never could match them. He continued to look 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 didn'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 do and to be and be and to be that and to be such and to be so and then we'll come to God and say, "Now look, Lord, I've tried at least." And God says, "Yes, I have seen your zeal and your best efforts and accomplishments but is 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 you. Scripture uses the word Mediator to describe Jesus Christ. Now God says, "Look, 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 wilt 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 these dry eyes." Did you hear what you just said? You only listed things about yourself and as 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 dots. "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 species of merit, you want to call it whatever: it could be works, it could be feelings, it could be fitness, it could be the sincerity... any time you look at any species 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 obtained when God enables us to walk and 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 stripping your hope in your righteousness away? Is He taking you off the sandy foundations of your zeal and 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 the righteousness of Himself in Jesus Christ, His Son, into the world. God sent His own 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 elder 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. That's stepping off the shore. And He is indeed calling you to trust His bridge or 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.* That statement means far more than what it perhaps seems to say but God is asking, "Will you believe Me?" Believe what? "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 I would tell Him something or rather confess something. Too many of you do not do that. You go home and think about the sermons you have heard but are not obeying or answering 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 anymore 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

royal robe and 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, in the atoning blood of Christ. I will entrust myself to Thee as the only Savior. I am well pleased with Him as Thou art well-pleased with Him. Thou tellest 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 and parrot what I said. There's plenty of that. He wants the heart. What I believe in my heart needs to be confessed with the mouth.

What is the promise? It is so hard to believe but it 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 only." He wants to hear that out of your mouth and heart.

You may say, "I've got some problems. 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 so 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 you makes you acceptable to God. Your condition, no matter how good it is, is still grounds for condemnation as your Maker sees deeper than the outside and sees you are a child of Adam. There is never in us a single reason of 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, I show this to Thee, I show that to Thee and hopefully I am impressing Thee enough to trade it for Thy grace." No, this is what God speaks, "Behold I stand at the door and I 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 laboring 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 convinced enough." Did you hear what you said? "I'm not convinced enough. I don't have enough." What is enough conviction? Enough conviction isn't necessary to lay awake for nights. The lost in hell are always awake. True or saving conviction of sin is the Spirit's work to make someone come to despair in 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 anyone to trust in God's promise or allows someone 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 now. 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, it will make them 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 word is there because the Ambassador of Christ may pronounce to you that 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 humbled enough. I'm not troubled about my sin." Well, shame on you. Do you know what sin is? It's offending God. It's 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 quite as bad as you think you are. "But how do I get there and how do I become repenting?" This is always at the same place and at the feet of the same Person. There is One able to save you of

your own thinking and that's Jesus Christ. He is exalted to be the Prince and Savior to give repentance. 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 are trusting 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, then this is impossible to truly believe. "But how can I believe that?" Oh friends, because the Bible says so. "Yeah, 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 be crawling over that bridge on my hands and knees, inch by inch by inch, even fearful or 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 effect the assurance of salvation.

But the promise is still true that all those that call upon the name of God with this very desire and confession of their heart, they shall be saved. We are reminded of that promising 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. 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, 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.