

ROMANS - #10

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

THE SOURCE OF FAITH

SCRIPTURE TEXT: ROMANS 10:1-21

MEMORY VERSE: ROM. 10:17. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

INTRODUCTION

If salvation is by faith, then what faith; where does it come from, how much do you need?

I have always been troubled by the shallow notion people have about “faith”. A prevalent concept is that you just “have” it, as though it is something you can concoct in your own thinking. You “just believe”. You were not born with faith; general education does not provide it and it is not a talent you possess, neither is it a process of osmosis. Then there is the prevailing view that you believe whatever you want, just believe it with all your heart.

Faith: something that is so talked about and emphasized throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament and yet, people, even professing Christians, are woefully lacking in this amazing product. Faith, that has the capacity to save you, lead you in your daily Christian walk, enlarge your entire view and purpose of life, secure for you the righteousness of God and is the channel for the countless blessings of God, including eternal life, yet it is looked upon with such a shallow understanding of what it really is. Where DOES it come from and how much do you need?

The memory verse is short but it contains a world of information and instructions on this subject. “FAITH COMES BY HEARING AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD”. You can’t get it any other way or from any other source. The Christian life that begins with just a small seed (of faith) grows daily as that seed increases. Thus, SIMPLY and PROFOUNDLY, the faith that brings to us a relationship with the God that made this world, is borne unto us on the breath of the preachers words, inspired by the Holy Spirit. That is why preaching is so important; not because of the preacher, but because of the message preached from the word of God. It is a narrow concept, yet it is broad enough and large enough to accomplish everything God wants done in your life and in this world. And it is unique, unequivocal, absolute, universal, all-sufficient and filled with everything the human spirit needs in order to have a saving relationship with God as well as be of service and purpose to his fellowman. No wonder the disciples petitioned Christ to “increase our faith”.

In this lesson our attention needs to be focused on the eternal truth that faith in God in any degree, comes from the preaching, teaching, learning, accepting and obeying what the Bible says about any matter of Christian importance. This is a faith that must grow and therefore requires a continual seeking and attention to the propounding of the word of God, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little, until we come into the unity of the faith, built up in all the life and purposes of God in Christ for our lives. That is why the teaching / preaching of the word of God is so very essential to everyone. It is, in fact, our daily bread; without it we perish.

DAILY SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS

MONDAY. ROM. 10:1-5. RIGHTEOUSNESS DID NOT COME BY THE LAW.

SCRIPTURES.

V1. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. 2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3. 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. 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. 5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

COMMENTS

Paul continues a thought as he begins this chapter which he emphasized in chapter 9, namely that he dearly longed for Israel to be saved, even to the loss of his own salvation. With the 9th and 10th chapters and their emphasis on the fact that Israel as a nation is not saved, but only through the faith available through the atoning work of Christ, notice an obscure thought in 10:1: "that they might be saved". That was a "then" and a "forever" entreaty. That is, there is no salvation for any Jew in some future, special arrangement, but only through the "arrangement" provided for them and all mankind by faith in Christ.

The "ignorance" on the part of Israel was not that they did not know much by way of learning in this life, but that they did not know the faith that was available through Christ. Thus they were ignorant of God's righteousness (through faith in Christ) and spent their days trying to establish their own righteousness by the precepts of the law. That is where they are today, only deeper into the abyss of spiritual ignorance about God's plan and purpose for them (and us). Christ was the end, the complete fulfillment of the law to all who believe. The entire law is fulfilled in one thing: faith in the atonement through Christ. Religious zeal, which they had in great measure, has no saving grace in it at all.

This ignorance on the part of the Jews is compounded in their ignorance of their own law. To be sure, they knew its ritualistic function and carefully carried out its daily and annual perfunctory duties. However they overlooked the real purpose and underlying meaning of those duties. For example, you may be sure that they carefully attended to the annual observance of the Passover feast. But the underlying purpose of this Passover sacrifice was as a type and fore runner of Christ, who is our

Passover sacrifice. Thus they had “a” righteousness by way of obeying the legalistic duties of the law but they were ignorant of “the” righteousness for which it was originally instituted and the only reason for its observance at all. Is this not what has happened today in the church? We have a ritualistic performance of faith in Christ but we fail to understand and believe in the real purpose of it. As an example again, consider the Passover; it has no place in our Christian faith by way of its original feast observance. But the underlying truth it contained has been missed altogether and very few Christians know what that truth is or, for that matter, know or see any need for any relationship to its grand design in Christ. That is a fatal ignorance, especially since it pervades throughout so much of the teachings of the Bible.

TUESDAY. ROM 10. 6-8. WHAT IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH LIKE.

SCRIPTURES.

V6. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above. 7. Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach.

COMMENTS

Paul’s words in verses 6-8, are essentially a quote from Det. 30:11-14. They are helpful in understanding these verses so I have reproduced them here. Det. 30:11-14. “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” These words from Deuteronomy give a clarity to Paul’s quotation from them in Romans. The passage is simply saying to us that the word of faith, preached by Paul, etc., is not some distant, difficult to obtain and understand message, but is as near to us as our hearing it, believing it in our hearts and obeying it. Nothing else should be read into the words about ascending up to heaven to bring it down, or descending into the depth of the earth to bring it up. Those expressions are metaphors of the futile and unnecessary idea that faith is some nearly impossible possession to obtain. It is, instead, a matter of hearing the gospel preached and yielding your heart and life to it and obeying it.

WEDNESDAY. ROM. 10: 9-13. CONFESSING AND BELIEVING IS THE PROCESS.

SCRIPTURES.

V9. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10. For with the heart men believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11. For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12. For there is no difference between the Jew and

the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

COMMENTS.

Here we have verses of scripture that are routinely taken out of their context and given a meaning they were not intended to convey. These scriptures are not a stand-alone directive of the plan of salvation, but a part of scriptures before and following them thereby impacting their application. When it is extracted from other contributing verses and taught as the whole plan of salvation, it produces an untenable application of such plan. By the emphatic statement that “if” we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that he has been resurrected, that we are thereby saved without the associated text and context, you create a lot of scriptural rejections. For example: you avoid water baptism, holiness of life, going to church, prayer, service, giving and a multitude of other Christian principals. The singular emphasis on this verse as the total composite of our being saved is to find an “easy believism faith” which increases the numbers flow.

The verse begins with “that”, which automatically reverts back to the preceding scriptures. In the preceding verse Paul spoke of the word of faith which he preached. In verses which follow, he continues to address this process of coming into the righteousness of Christ by the preaching of faith. If you incorporate verses 9-10 into this process, it produces an emphasis on the method of obtaining faith and righteousness which is preaching and believing and obeying. The whole lesson from Paul is that we hear his (total) preaching of Christ, believe it and obey it, and righteousness by faith is produced. Then contrast this with all he has written to the Romans about being saved by faith and not by the works of the law, and you have a continuing message about how righteousness is obtained and not about just a few verses purporting to be the complete plan of salvation. He is not giving a singular passage on the birth of Christianity, but an entire message on the process about obtaining faith, by which salvation comes. This process is preaching and believing, not some mysterious duty of ascending to heaven or descending into the grave to obtain Christ and his righteousness. Preaching is the process; hearing and obeying is the response and righteousness is the results.

These thoughts are confirmed in verses 11-13: Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed, meaning that Christ accepts and justifies all who believe on him. In this case, “all” means both Jew and Gentile. As verse 12 verifies when it says, there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, because God is equally rich to all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This expression, found here and in Acts 2:21, etc, is talking about the universal availability and opportunity of the gospel to anyone.

THURSDAY. ROM. 10: 14-17. FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE PREACHED WORD OF GOD.

SCRIPTURES

V14. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15. And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is writt3n, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the

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

COMMENTS.

These four verses describe the entire process of obtaining a saving faith in God. Simply put, it is a called preacher, declaring the truth as it is in Christ concerning his salvation; this then is coupled with our hearing, believing and obeying that preached word. That is the source of faith. It does not come from our determination and will to believe that God exists and that he can save us. The faith that can save is obtained from the preaching of the word of God. In the book of Acts, this was the pattern in every church that was established. The gospel was preached; people believed and obeyed and salvation was the result. There is no faith in God that does not come by preaching. It is not a matter of relying on a religious system and how they might administer their rituals. It is a matter of every person hearing the message of the gospel, properly divided and carefully taught. Analytical preaching is the great need in all churches today. Great themes for messages are good but salvation comes by the systematic preaching of the plan of salvation itself.

That is why verse 15 speaks of the beauty of the feet of him that brings glad tidings of good things. It has nothing to do with the feet of a preacher, per se. It is simply saying that it is by the feet of the preacher that the everlasting gospel is carried to the world, and that is beautiful: the carrying of the gospel to the world. The final analysis of faith is that it comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

FRIDAY. ROM. 10:18-21 . A DISOBEDIENT PEOPLE

SCRIPTURES.

V18. But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. 19. But I say, did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. (Det. 32:21). 20. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21. But to Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

COMMENTS.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God and thus Israel cannot contend that they have never had the privilege of hearing. Under Moses and the prophets Israel was told that their relationship with God was not by the offering of animal sacrifices but by the hearing and obedience to the word of God. This they refused to do. They were also told that they would be replaced by a nation that was not known as the people of God, even the Gentiles. None of this moved Israel to obedience to God. They were disobedient, not to the feast days and animal sacrifices but to the words of faith that had come down from their own patriarch, Abraham. That is why they were in a

status of spiritual rejection before God and that is why they will remain there until and unless they hear the words of faith and obey them as they are in Christ. And that is the message that Paul has been trying to get across in this epistle to the Romans, that God has called the Gentiles which was his predetermined plan before the foundation of the world. That is also why God has concluded both Jew and Gentile under sin that he might show mercy to both through the sacrifice of Christ for their salvation.

SUMMARY

“THE SOURCE OF FAITH” is the topic of this lesson and that is because it is also the topic of this portion of Paul’s letter to the Church at Rome. It is a very critical topic, not only to the church at Rome, but to us today. It cannot be over-emphasized. The need is for there to be someone called of God to preach his unsearchable riches and for people to hear it. And this does not mean some “one-time” church attendance and hear some message and respond to the preacher’s invitation to repeat a sinner’s prayer. It means hearing the word of God taught, time after time, analytically, and learning that word by way of obedience to it. We have only a “Jn. 3:16” kind of religion, meaning, a narrowly restricted view of what the Bible means to us and that we don’t need the whole body of biblical faith written out on the fleshly tables of our hearts. The early church had no Bible except Old Testament scriptures and yet they were the ones who embodied and conveyed to us the entire structure of New Testament truths, all of which were derived from Old Testament teachings.

The best way to summarize this chapter is to summarize what it means to hear and believe the word of God for our lives. It means that each one who comes to Christ has a desperate need for the continual teaching of the word of God in the “school” of Christ. This, of course, brings you under the responsibility of obeying it and that is the likely problem. My experience has been that where people are willing to listen to and practice the word of God as taught from the pulpit, that they grow in God and every good work and the work of God in their hearts and lives becomes a manifest product. An unwillingness to submit to this will lead to the same thing that Paul said about Israel: “a disobedient and gainsaying people”.

Therefore let us hear it one more time. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

QUESTIONS

1. What and how is the righteousness which comes by faith applied to our lives?
2. Discuss the necessity of the continual preaching of the word of God.
3. What qualifies one to preach God’s word?
4. What responsibility does each Christian have to be sure these qualifications are met?
5. What is the best procedure to become strong in the Christian faith?