



Believe

EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES AND BELIEVES
IN JESUS WILL BE SAVED.

ROMANS 9:30–10:3,9-17

When people hear about someone making a confession, their thoughts may go to the criminal justice system. Thinking that way wouldn't be a mistake. When a person confesses to a crime, it usually means that the law has been broken and justice will be served. In the legal system, confession confirms guilt and results in punishment. But in the gospel, confession of Jesus acknowledges our need for Him and leads to freedom and salvation.



What's the connection between confessing to a crime and believing that you broke the law?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 9:1–10:21

Paul exposed his heart for the Jews as he wrote to the church in Rome. He recounted how God had blessed them throughout their history as His people. God had embraced them as His people, given them His law, graced them with His presence, and fulfilled His promise to them regarding Jesus Christ.

In the face of their rejection of Christ, Paul insisted that God had not failed them. God’s relationship with them across the centuries underscored His sovereign wisdom. Paul touched on an assortment of ways in which God worked with His people in keeping with His eternal purpose. God’s actions reveal that He made decisions about them that would glorify Himself. Accordingly, nobody had the authority to question His wisdom any more than a lump of clay had the right to doubt the potter.

In keeping with His eternal plan, God included Gentiles as well as Jews. Unlike the Jews, Gentiles did not have the Mosaic law to guide them. They lived in spiritual darkness. However, when some of them heard the good news of Christ, they gave their lives to Him by faith. Meanwhile, Jews stumbled over Christ like runners who tripped over a stone on their path.

Paul went on to assert that Jesus alone provides the way to salvation. Anyone who believes in Him and confesses Him as Lord would be saved. Likewise, everyone who receives the gift of salvation through Him will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him.

Paul asserted that Jewish people could not say that God had not given them the opportunity to hear the message of salvation. He cited three Old Testament passages to support it. He referred to Psalm 19:4 as he underscored the truth regarding the proclamation of God’s Word. Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1 confirmed that they had an awareness of God’s ways with them. Even so, they refused to obey Him.

 **Read Romans 9:30–10:3 and 10:9-17 in your Bible.**
Where do you see the tension between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH (ROM. 9:30-33)

³⁰ What should we say then? Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith. ³¹ But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. ³² Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. ³³ As it is written, Look, I am putting a stone in Zion to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and the one who believes on him will not be put to shame.

VERSES 30-32

Paul has explained in Romans that all people—Jews and Gentiles—have sinned against God and need salvation. He has made the point that no one can be saved by works of the law, since all disobey the law (Rom. 3:19-20), and there is one way of salvation for all people—through Christ. Here, Paul noted that Gentiles did not *pursue •righteousness*. On the contrary, they wandered in spiritual darkness. But when they heard the good news about Jesus Christ, many Gentiles believed and placed their *•faith* in Christ, receiving His gift of salvation. Their trust in Jesus made them right with God.

The people of *Israel* chose a path that led them in a different direction. Paul grew up the Jewish world. He knew well the Jewish approach to being right with God. They pursued *righteousness* based on works. Instead of entrusting their lives to Christ, they gave themselves to knowing and keeping *the law*. Instead of God, the law became the central focus of their attention, and keeping it became their sole ambition. They thought that if they kept the law, they could earn righteousness. However, the path they took kept them from being right with God.

Consequently, they turned their backs on the gospel message that centered in Christ. They rejected Jesus and the way of salvation that He alone could provide. His life, death, burial, and resurrection served as the *stone* they *stumbled* over as they sought to achieve righteousness by way of the law.

VERSE 33

Paul pointed to two Old Testament passages to make his point. In Isaiah 8:14, the Lord said that the Messiah would be a sanctuary for some, but for the house of Israel, He would be “a stone to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and a trap and a snare.” For those who trusted in Him, the Messiah was a sanctuary. For those who trusted in themselves, He became a stumbling block. In Isaiah 28:16, the prophet noted that the Messiah would be a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. However, this was only for the one who believes. Paul noted that believers would never be ashamed of placing their faith in Christ.



Why might people stumble over the message of the gospel?

MISGUIDED ZEAL (ROM. 10:1-3)

¹ Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation. ² I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ Since they are ignorant of the righteousness of God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God’s righteousness.

VERSE 1

Paul addressed the believers in Rome with sincere affection. Even though he had not yet visited the church, he affirmed their spiritual kinship as **brothers and sisters**. At the same time, he revealed his affection for the Jewish people. His heart had been broken for them, and he had a genuine **desire** to see them come to faith in Christ. Paul’s heavy burden over their lostness caused him to pray for their **salvation**.

VERSES 2-3

Paul could **testify** to the difficulty Jews had in trusting Jesus for salvation. He knew they possessed a **zeal for God**. They tried to obey the requirements of the law to attain righteousness on their own. However, they lacked the spiritual **knowledge** necessary to grasp God’s intention regarding the law. It’s not that they lacked intelligence. Rather, they suffered from spiritual ignorance.

They had been **ignorant** of the way God intended for them to be made righteous. They continued to work toward earning **their own** righteousness by keeping the law. They simply had **not submitted to** God's way of being right with Him through faith in Christ.



How can religious zeal get in the way of knowing God?



Whose salvation are you continually praying for?



KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation*

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.
(See John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)

SALVATION AVAILABLE TO ALL (ROM. 10:9-13)

⁹ If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, ¹² since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. ¹³ For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

VERSES 9-10

Paul made clear God's way of salvation. It involves confessing **Jesus is Lord**. Confessing Jesus as Lord is the same as acknowledging that He is God. This would have been difficult for the Jew and a primary reason they were rejecting Jesus. But salvation is not possible without confessing, “Jesus is Lord.”

Confession is an external sign of one's acceptance of Him, but accepting Jesus goes beyond simple lip service. Faith demands that

you *believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead*. Salvation involves both believing and outwardly confessing.

While Paul emphasized that salvation is something that takes place in the *heart*, he also stressed the importance of the *mouth*. Ultimately, confession and belief are two sides of the same coin. When we confess, we express with our words what’s going on in our hearts.

God does not want anyone to be excluded from the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation.

VERSES 11-13

Once again, Paul quoted from Isaiah 28:16 (see also Rom. 9:33). Paul underscored the truth that the good news of salvation is for *everyone*. God did not intend for the gospel to be shared only with certain individuals. He wants every person to hear it. Those who place their faith in Jesus will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him. The word *shame* can also mean “disappointed.” Everyone, both Jew and Gentile, can have confidence that God saves those who put their trust in Him.

In verse 13, Paul quoted from Joel 2:32. Paul was emphasizing that *everyone* is welcome at the cross. Consequently, God does not want anyone to be excluded from the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation and to call on *the name of the Lord* Jesus to *be saved*.

 **What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord?**

 **Paul made the connection between salvation and Jesus’s resurrection. What practical difference does Jesus’s resurrection make in your life right now?**

GO TELL (ROM. 10:14-17)

¹⁴ **How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?** ¹⁵ **And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.** ¹⁶ **But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message?** ¹⁷ **So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.**

VERSES 14-15

In light of the truth that the gospel is for all people, Paul raised four questions. Each question began with the same word: **how**. First, he asked how individuals would **call on** Christ to save them if they have not **believed in** him. Second, he wanted to know how people could believe in Jesus **without hearing** about Him. Third, how could they hear about Jesus **without a preacher**? He considered a *preacher* to be any believer who shares the gospel message.

The fourth question asks how they can preach **unless they are sent**. This fourth question points to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Paul's poignant question challenges us to support missionaries and other vocational ministers as they share the gospel. They've been called to proclaim the good news of Christ around the world. However, it also challenges all believers. We have been *sent* to share the gospel in our neighborhoods and around the corner. Paul's reference to Isaiah 52:7 in verse 15 inspires us as we take to heart our call to make sure that others hear the gospel.

VERSE 16

Everyone needs an opportunity to hear the gospel. However, **not all** people who hear the **•gospel** will respond by receiving the gift of salvation. Paul said that not all will obey the gospel. He may have been thinking about Jewish people in his day. They rejected Christ and the gospel message that centered in Him. However, they couldn't say that the gospel had not ever been shared with them. Paul echoed Isaiah's assertion that the **message** of salvation had been presented to them, but they refused to believe it (Isa. 53:1).

VERSE 17

In this verse, Paul returned to a foundational truth about the gospel message. Receiving the gift of salvation requires people to place

their *faith* in Jesus. When individuals place their faith in Him, they will be saved. They cannot earn their salvation. Neither can they expect to be saved because they happen to have some sort of relationship with believers. Therefore, the challenge confronting believers is to make sure that others have the opportunity to hear the gospel. After people hear *about Christ*, they will be able to respond to what they have *heard*. Hearing the good news about Christ prompts them to place their faith in Him.

 **What hinders people from calling on Jesus for salvation?**
What role do believers play in removing these hindrances?

 **Who shared the gospel with you when you invited Christ into your life by faith? Who in your world needs you to share the good news of Christ with them?**



BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand another Bible passage.*

Read Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:14-41. List all the main points that you see in his sermon and compare it to what you find in Paul’s teaching from Romans 9–10. Peter’s message and Paul’s writings make up what has been called Christianity’s “kerygma,” or the preaching of the apostles. Consider how you can share these truths with those around you. Evaluate your effectiveness in sharing the gospel with those in your sphere of influence.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + All people need to understand that true righteousness comes through faith not by works.
- + Believers can follow Paul’s example by praying for the salvation of lost people.
- + Any person who has not yet believed and confessed Jesus can do so and be saved.
- + Believers must tell others the gospel message and send missionaries throughout the entire world.

 **Spend time with your Bible study group sharing accounts of your most recent conversations about Jesus with lost people. Then have several members share their testimonies about how they gave their lives to Christ.**

 **When did you place your faith in Jesus and receive His gift of salvation? What kind of difference does He make in your life right now?**

 **Memorize Romans 10:9.**

Prayer Needs
