

96-12-15b

We're back from our break and we have reviewed in our first session why we're here, why we're here on the planet, why we're here in Romans, why Paul is talking about Israel at this point. And we're ready now to move forward. We're going to finish chapter 9 and move well into chapter 10.

And he has made the case, and he's illustrating the case, that God has a purpose even for Israel in their disobedience, even Israel in their lack of understanding. God will work that into, and has worked that into, his plan. And so when people say, well, what about Israel, and has this thwarted God's plan, has God somehow not been able to fulfill his promises to Israel, has God cast off his people, is God, is he turning to the Gentiles because Israel is hopeless, what's the situation? And so Paul is addressing this.

And in verse 19, after they see the statement that God has mercy on whom he has had mercy, God has compassion on whom he has had compassion, the objection of this representative Jewish Christian is brought up, which today would be our representative Christian fundamentalist or our representative Christian evangelical. Well, how can God find fault with our operation? What have we done that resisted his will? In what way have we been disobedient? In what way have we failed to fulfill God's command? Surely I'm not in this category you're talking about. Surely this doesn't apply to us.

And Paul says, on the contrary, in verse 20, who are you, old man, who answers back to God? Do you think that God doesn't, isn't capable of making an accurate evaluation? Do you think that, are you going to accuse God of being wrong and bringing you under this indictment? Do you think that God does not have eyes to see or ears to hear? That God doesn't penetrate the secrets of the heart and know that what you're doing isn't directly motivated, that what you're doing is sourced in a desire to impress others or a desire to establish one's own righteousness? The difference in attitude that's being pointed out here is not unlike the difference in attitude that Jesus pointed out to Jewish believers toward the end of that portion of the age of Israel. When he gave his illustration, remember when he was talking about praying and he was talking about hypocrites and he said that there's one that stands on the street corner and prays in public and says, oh God, I thank you that I am not like other men. Kind of reminds us of Romans chapter 2. He says, who are you, old man, that you're busy judging others and you don't judge yourself? Oh God, I thank you that I'm not like these Godless pagans out here.

I'm not like these terrible ingrates who commit all these terrible heinous deeds. And yet is guilty of self-righteousness, is guilty of judging himself by a false standard and believing himself to be righteous, believing himself to be wise. Paul gives that roster.

He says, if you think that you're a guide to the blind and a trainer of children and a teacher of the law and so forth, and yet you're guilty of these attitude sins, these thought pattern sins, these failures of the glory of God and the grace of God. And Jesus said there's another man that prays

and says, oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner. He looks at himself and recognizes that there is a need for improvement, that he has failed and he's judging himself by the standard of God's word, which at that time was the law.

And he knew that he had committed sins and he acknowledged those before God. With which one is God pleased? And it's the same idea here. Here is the self-righteous Israel saying, why does he yet find fault? Who has resisted his will? I don't see where this shoe fits me.

And Paul says, who are you to answer back to God? Who are you to question the judgment of God when he says that you have failed? He's the one that wrote the standard. He's the one that ought to know if you are meeting it or not. And we stand in the full light of the word of God and in the full light of God's evaluation.

And God knows exactly where we stand. We can fool ourselves. The heart is deceitful, desperately wicked.

Who can comprehend it? God comprehends it. God sees every thought, every action. Jesus said that we will stand accountable for every word and every deed, every thought.

We will stand there plain and naked to view at the judgment seat of Christ. And that's God's basis for evaluating. We have no way to answer back to God and say, why have you given me this role in your plan? Why am I denied inheritance? Why am I denied reward? Why am I not being recognized for my righteousness? Why am I classed with the disobedient? Who are we to answer back to God? This has commonly been construed that God picks some for salvation and others for not.

And who are we to answer back to God that he should pick some and not others? And it's so far wide at the market. That's not the subject of our discussion. It's the life of believers.

It's where we stand in the evaluation of God that is under discussion. That's the theme and that's the point. And we can't answer back to God.

And the answer to that question is obvious and clear. It's easy for us to see when we look at the indictment of the nation of Israel down through the generations. That God was just, he was so merciful generation after generation after generation.

He held out his hands all day long to a disobedient and stiff-necked people who did not believe themselves to be disobedient and did not believe themselves to be stiff-necked. They blinded themselves. They hardened their hearts.

They were callous. And having ears they did not hear. Having eyes they did not see.

And their heart could not be penetrated by the word of God because of the pattern of decisions and the pattern of priorities that they themselves set. And God eventually turned them over to

judgment and captivity and to loss of the throne of a descendant of David and so forth. And yet here they are once again.

Paul says, you will say to me, well why does he get my fault? Who has resisted his will? Look at the history of generations that engaged in the same kind of thinking. God has been more than merciful, more than compassionate, more than long-suffering for hundreds of years dealing with this nation of Israel. And it's the nation that's under discussion.

And we'll see that as we go forward. Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him that formed it? Why did you make me like this? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay, some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience, much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction? These are believers who don't get it. Who don't understand and pursue the plan and the purpose of God in their time.

In our time it's the church age. In those days it was the plan that God had for Israel. And God assigns us our life in human history.

We were, all of us in this room, were assigned birth and life and possibly death in the age of the church. We're in this dispensation. God could have placed us anywhere from Seth on to the last birth in human history.

But he assigned us here. He gave us this specific mission. We don't have the mission of keeping the law.

We don't have the mission of living as a member of the remnant perhaps in the Israelite history that's detailed in the Old Testament. God assigned us here. This is our MOS if you will.

It's our mission in this age to perform specific tasks in God's plan. So, God willing to show his wrath in verse 22 and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. These were vessels made of the clay that spoiled in the potter's hand.

They were fitted for discipline. God was making a point when he disciplined Israel, when he denied Israel the blessings and the fulfillment of the promises, when he denied Israel all of those blessings that were given on Mount Gerizim. He had to fulfill the curses that were given on the other mountain when Israel stood that day with Joshua and heard the blessings and curses pronounced.

And there was a purpose in that. All these things were written for our construction upon whom the ends of the ages have come. We should learn something from that.

God let Israel endure 400 years of bondage and brought them out with a mighty hand from Egypt and recorded that and referenced it dozens and dozens and dozens of times. He identified

himself as the Lord that brought Israel out of the land of Egypt countless times in the Old Testament. But people had to endure bondage for 400 years so that God could do that.

And it was a part of God's plan. And God put up with disobedient Israel for generation after generation after generation to make a point about what he's looking for, about what he requires, just like we read out of the Scriptures in our first session. And God endured with great patience disobedient believers, believers that missed the boat.

He recorded their history. He endured them and put up with them and preserved them generation after generation and then disciplined them and changed the age and put a new plan into effect in this age and all of it's for a purpose. He could have just started out.

Why didn't Jesus Christ come in the garden and die at that point and save Adam and Eve? Why didn't Jesus come 200 years after the Garden of Eden incident when there were maybe 6 or 7,000 people on the planet and secure salvation and resume eternity with purified individuals? Why has human history gone on so long? God uses each generation and each dispensation to make a point and to reveal and illustrate and demonstrate his character and his purpose. And it's necessary for God to put up with a lot in order to do that. And that's what this is talking about.

Not only in the realm of unbelievers and your Sodom and Gomorrah and your Ninevites but also disobedient believers. The majority of us are disobedient believers. The majority of us are on the broad road going through the wide gate that leads to destruction.

But God endures that so that he can show his mercy and make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he prepared ahead of time, which he designed ahead of time and planned for and made provision for ahead of time for glory. Even us when he is called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles. Now notice that.

That is a key phrase that is often overlooked in Romans chapter 9. That these are church age believers. Jews and Gentiles. Who are the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction? It's the nation of Israel.

It's the Israelites, the believers of the Old Testament who generation after generation failed the grace of God. Didn't figure it out what God required. Which was to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly.

To love the Lord their God with all their heart, all their soul and their strength. He is their God. They're saved but they didn't love him.

They didn't serve him out of love and out of humility and recognition of who and what God was. They were saved. They were believers but they were vessels of wrath fitted to destruction because they didn't pursue their mission.

They misunderstood it. They misconstrued it and were happy doing so. They were vessels of wrath.

Why did God put up with Israel? So that he could show, make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy. Who are the vessels of mercy? It's not any believer of any age is it? Paul says it's us. The ones he has called not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles.

It's church age believers. They are the vessels of mercy and they are contrasted with the vessels of wrath. The first dispensation in this two dispensation view that we have here.

We're looking at the previous age and the present age. And Israel as a nation and as a people failed God. And God judged them for it.

And they're still saying why does he yet find fault? They still don't get it. But God put up with them so that he could show mercy in this age. The vessels of mercy called from the Jews and the Gentiles.

And this is living righteousness. This is not heaven and hell. This is God's pleasure in believers.

And God put up with that and recorded that. All of the prophets and all of his disappointment and the unfaithfulness and the sin and evil that Israel as a leading nation as the people of God committed. God recorded all of that and set it down to make a contrast and to show us what our mission and what life is all about.

What righteousness by faith really means. Even us whom he has called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles. If you try to make this into salvation from the lake of fire how does it apply to Old Testament saints? What about Abel and Noah and Abraham and so forth? They weren't called from the Jews and the Gentiles.

Paul is making a specific argument about where we stand in this age in contrast to the previous one. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said unto them you are not my people there they shall be called but you are the living God. We discussed that when we went through this.

That in the age of Israel which is our first point of contrast Gentiles weren't permitted in. That's why they have the court of the Gentiles. But now we are called children of the living God.

To them he gave the authority to be called sons of God. Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel. Notice he said that these vessels of mercy are those he has called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.

So he talks about the Gentiles. He says look those that were not my people are now my people. That's the Gentiles.

Now he's going to talk about the Jews who are church age believers. He says Isaiah cries out concerning Israel though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea only a remnant shall be delivered for he will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed we would have been like Sodom and remained like Gomorrah.

What's the picture of Sodom and Gomorrah? Being utterly cut off. There's nobody that can trace their ancestors back to Sodom and Gomorrah. Nobody survived.

They were utterly obliterated except for Lot. And unless God had preserved a remnant Israel would be a historical footnote instead of having many hundreds of thousands of Jews who persist even down to the present day. What shall we say then in verse 30? The Gentiles who followed not after righteousness.

This is an interesting word in the Greek. It means to pursue. I'll find this in the text here and give you the word.

Romans chapter 9 verse 30. The actual form here is diakonta. It's a present active participle.

And it means those who were pursuing. And then it has a negative. Those who were not pursuing.

Those who were not running after righteousness. The Gentiles who were not running after righteousness, who were not pursuing it, have attained to righteousness. And the word attained there is from kata lambano.

K-A-T-A-L-A-N-B-A-N-O Lambano is the word to receive. And kata can be according to or with reference to. And kata lambano means to, it was used of receiving an inheritance.

And if you do a word study on this and see how it's used especially in the New Testament, it has the idea that you receive something, but it's because you have qualified for it. When you receive an inheritance, you receive it because you have qualified. You're named in the will.

And you show up and you claim the inheritance. You receive it because you qualify for it. And the Gentiles who were not running after righteousness have qualified for it and received it in the same way that you might get an inheritance.

Even the righteousness which is of faith. And that's the theme of this book. Notice what Paul has been talking about here.

This is living righteousness. They weren't looking for it, but they received it. And that's the theme of this book.

Notice what Paul has been talking about here. This is living righteousness. They weren't looking

for it, but they received it.

They weren't running after it. Well, what does it mean to run after righteousness? Well, he's going to explain it because that's what the Jews were doing. 31.

Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, and this is that same present active participle, were following after the law of righteousness, have not attained to the law of righteousness. If you look at the different English translations, like the Numerican Standard, the NIV, and so forth, some of them say have not obtained that righteousness, have not attained that righteousness. But this word is also very significant.

Israel, who pursued the law of righteousness, unto the law, have not. And then we have Ef-Basen here, which is, if you spell out this form of it, it's E-P-H-T-H-A-S-E-N. And it's an aorist active indicative.

The previous one, where it says that the Israelites have received righteousness, it's an aorist. It comprehends the fact that it has been assigned. Somebody might want to go in and say, well, that's the point of salvation.

But what this is talking about is you have a combination of a present active participle, which talks about the status of the Gentiles. They are not pursuing righteousness. They're not trying to keep the law.

They're not under the law, and never have been. But they have attained unto righteousness. As a category, they have received it.

They've qualified for it, and they're receiving it. And again, talking in broad general terms, Paul himself is an Israelite, and he has certainly been declared righteous by God as a believer. But as a category, Israel has not received that righteousness.

In fact, this word means to anticipate, to arrive at, to come before. And it's a very significant word here because all of those meanings are wrapped up in this. He has just talked about Jacob and Esau.

He's talked about Isaac and Ishmael in chapter 9. And the son who comes first doesn't end up with the inheritance, doesn't end up with the blessing, doesn't end up with the promise. And now he's comparing the Gentiles and the Jews. And he's saying Israel, who was seeking righteousness, who was running after it through the law, did not arrive.

This word means literally to arrive, to get ahead of, to come first. To anticipate is one of its meanings. They didn't get there.

They didn't arrive first. They were the first ones to be made a central focus in God's plan, and they didn't arrive at righteousness. They didn't get there because they didn't pursue it by faith.

And that's what he says in verse 32. Why? Because not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. Faith is in the soul.

Works are in the physical universe, and they did a superficial thing. They did things in a superficial way. They didn't start with faith.

They stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of a fence. Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed.

And the whole point of this quotation is that it's the faith that achieves righteousness. Whoever believes. It doesn't say whoever runs after him, whoever lifts up the rock and carries it, whoever pushes the rock up the slope.

Remember old Sisyphus down there in Dante's Inferno, pushing the rock up the slope and down it rolls. That's his experience of hell, as he pushes it up and it rolls back down. A lot of times we feel like we're having that experience.

A lot of believers in Christian service feel like they have that experience. And one of the reasons is they're operating in works and not in faith. In many cases.

And it's a stumbling stone, a rock of a fence. Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed. It's trust.

It's faith. It's looking at the inner life first. All of these other things will come.

So now we get to chapter 10. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. And right away our standard traditional knee-jerk understanding kicks in.

And we say, well, he wants Israel to come to salvation. He wants Israel to come to Christ. He wants Israel to be delivered from the lake of fire.

Several times now we have gone back and studied. And you can do this yourself. Get a complete concordance and do a study on salvation.

Get a Greek concordance or an Englishman's or whatever. And look at Sozo and its derivatives in the New Testament. And you will see that well over half the time, when Sozo or Soterios are used, which are the Greek words that are translated salvation, it's not talking about it cannot be made to talk about eternal salvation.

It's talking about deliverance in a general sense. One of the English translations of that word that's very valid is rescue. Now we use the word rescue in English to talk about salvation.

We have a hymn, rescue the perishing. We have been rescued from the flames. Rescued from eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

But we also use rescue for temporal circumstances. We use rescue when we run out of gas by the side of the road. Well, I ran out of gas.

I made a phone call. So and so came and rescued me. And it doesn't have the full concept of being rescued out of mortal danger.

But when you're talking about somebody stranded on a cliff or up in the snowy slopes of Pikes Peak or Mount Everest or something, and they're stranded in a blizzard and someone with a helicopter repelling and so forth rescues them, it can mean life and death. The same thing is true of Sozo and Soterios and all of their derivatives. And here, when Paul says, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be delivered, this is not talking about eternal salvation.

And it will bear out both from our previous context and the subsequent context. My heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for deliverance. The word there isn't even in there.

If you've got an American Standard, you'll see that the possessive is not present. It's in italics. It's for deliverance.

What does he say in verse 2? I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God. Now, how can you be an unbeliever and have a zeal for God? You don't believe in God. You don't believe it's necessary to please Him.

You don't care anything about it if you're an unbeliever. The Israel that Paul is talking about here is believing Israel. Jewish Christians.

I bear them witness they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. They're not operating scripturally. They have the motivation.

They claim God. They know about God. They have a zeal for Him, but it's not informed.

It isn't guided and directed by the word of God. It's not according to knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

This is disobedience. This is failure to subject oneself to the authority of God that He's revealed in the Scriptures. And Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Look at verse 4. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Now, a little quick pop quiz. Is the law a means of salvation? The answer to question one is no.

Has the law ever been a means of salvation? The answer to that question is also no. The law never was, is not now, never will be a tool related to salvation. Faith in God, believing that He is, that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

In this age, there is none other name, other heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. That's eternal salvation. What think ye of Christ? In the Old Testament, what do you think about God? But the law was given to Israel.

The law was given to guide and direct and provide a way of function for believers. It's a system of worship. It's a system of rehabilitation and cleansing, restoration to fellowship and function as the people of God.

It was given to the people of God who, by definition, came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb. So what's verse 4 talking about? Christ is the end of the law. Christ is not the end of condemnation in this context.

He's not talking about Christ as the end of no hope, no life, no future, destination, link of fire. That's not what He's talking about, is it? He says Christ is the end of the law. What was the law? The law defined righteousness for Old Testament saints, guided them in worship and fellowship and function.

Christ is the end of the law. What's He talking about? There's a different way for believers to operate because that's what the law was, a system of operation for believers. It wasn't a system of salvation.

So this helps us keep on track here in the argument. He's talking about believers and says Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Moses writes that a man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by that righteousness.

That was the Old Testament economy. But the righteousness based on faith speaks this way. Do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down, or who will descend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

We're not going to go into a detailed analysis of this quote, but if you go back to Deuteronomy chapter 30, which we need to do at this point, go back to Deuteronomy chapter 30. Just as a thought here as we turn to Deuteronomy 30, how would you classify the book of Deuteronomy? What is it a part of? It's the Pentateuch. It's the law of Moses, isn't it? It's the fifth book.

This is the law we're looking at now. And Paul is quoting the law. He's quoting Deuteronomy 30.

Look at verse 10. If you obey the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, notice it's not just an issue of mechanical obedience, it's an issue of thought and intent of the heart. If you love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul.

If you love God with all your heart and all your soul, you can't get into mechanical obedience anymore. That precludes it, if you love God with all your heart and all your soul. For this

commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

It is not in heaven that you should say, Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it that we observe it? Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say, Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it that we may observe it? But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. When the law was given the issue was, it's in your mouth, it's in your heart, it's right here. God has spelled out clearly what he requires.

And it's not just mechanical obedience, it's love, complete love, total dedication of heart and soul to God. Seeking to please him first and foremost, whatever it takes, whatever sacrifices involved, whatever people may think. That was the heart requirement of the law.

And for these people who are thinking that the law is a system of righteousness as a believer, Paul quotes this and he says, If you go back to the origin of the law, what did Moses say? It's not too high, it's not too low, it's in your mouth and in your heart to understand and observe. He had no excuse for moving up the law. It was right there.

It wasn't too high, it wasn't too far away, it was right there made clear. And the same is true of the mission in this age. The same thing is true.

These things were written for our instruction. And so Paul says in Romans chapter 10, What does it say in verse 8? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith which we are preaching.

The word of faith, righteousness by faith. The law was for a different age. Israel has served its purpose.

The history of Israel has made its point. And now the same principle that was given at the inception of the law applies at the inception of the church age. This word of faith that we preach is this.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be delivered. Now we have all quoted this scripture countless times as a salvation verse. But in this context, if you think about what it's saying, this verse has also caused us some difficulties because a lot of people have decided that you've got to have verbal confession to be saved.

It says right here you've got to confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus. And if you don't tell somebody, and that's been the justification for walking down the aisle. You've got to tell someone.

You've got to verbally confess that Jesus is Lord and you'll be saved. And so people have added this to Acts 16.31 and the other salvation related passages and have said it's not enough to believe in the heart. You've got to confess with the mouth.

Look at what Paul says here in verse 10. For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness. And with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Verbal confession results in salvation. It's in the pages of scripture right here. The only problem with that interpretation, which I have been as guilty of in the past as anyone, is that it fails to take into account the context.

It fails to take into account the fact that most of the time the word salvation does not refer to deliverance from the lake of fire. Think about our study last year in Galatians chapter 1, where Paul says Christ died to deliver us from sozo, to save us out of this present evil age. There's deliverance in time.

Deliverance in the sense of being delivered from the broad road and the wide gate. Deliverance in the sense of being shaken free from tradition and cultural norms and social norms that lead us down a road that does not please God. We need to be delivered.

These people to whom this book was written need to be delivered out of wrong thinking, bad values, bad judgment, a misguided view of life. So now what about this verbal confession thing? The word of faith which we are preaching. And he goes back and he's applying what came through the inspired pen of Moses in Deuteronomy.

The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart. What does that mean? What's that talking about? Who is Moses talking to when he delivers this message from God in Deuteronomy 30, 13 and 14? Who's he talking to? Unbelievers or believers? Is he trying to get Israel saved? Not at all. They're already delivered out of Egypt.

What did the Passover land? What is the law? The law is righteousness for believers. It's the system of operation for believers. And Moses is saying this word, this instruction, this guidance for you as a believer is not too far away.

You have no excuse for not understanding it. It's in your mouth and it's in your heart. And Paul is applying that same principle for these believers of living righteousness in this age.

And he says, look, this righteousness by faith is not too hard for you. It's not up in heaven. It's not across the sea or in the abyss.

And it's so far away that we have to send somebody to go get it. In this case, Christ. He says, just as Moses did, this word of faith which we are preaching is near you.

In your mouth and in your heart. What is this word of faith? Living righteousness by living faith for living believers. It's not salvation.

You can't make it be salvation. You don't have the right audience. You don't have the right context.

You don't have the right application of either the Old Testament situation or the New. It just will not work. So we are relieved of having to explain why verbal confession is necessary to be delivered from the lake of fire.

It does leave us, however, with the question of what does this mean if it's not talking about eternal salvation from the lake of fire. If it's talking about living deliverance out of this present evil age. If it's talking about the operation of believers, what does it mean? We have an organization that is based right here in Texas, in Irving, called the Grace Evangelical Society.

It is a great organization. I believe in their purpose, in their stated goal, in the things that they do. I would encourage you to look into receiving a subscription to their little newsletter.

They also have a quarterly theological journal. Their stated purpose is to promote and, in the right sense of the word, defend the concept of salvation by grace through faith. To answer the teachings and the proponents of views that try to add lordship or try to add something to the concept of salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

They write scholarly articles and they engage in scholarly debate and argument with those who try to interpret the Bible in a different way. It's a very worthy organization. I'll just quickly tell you that the Grace Evangelical Society is P.O. Box 167128, Irving, Texas, 75016.

P.O. Box 167128, Irving, Texas, 75016. You can call and subscribe. Their number is area code 972-257-1160.

That's 972-257-1160. The reason I give you that is I'm about to quote from a very good article that came in this month's Grace In Focus flyer. It's just a little four-page flyer that comes out every so often.

I think it's bi-monthly. But there are really great articles in here that are beneficial for believers. There's a great article in this issue, which is the November-December issue, 1996, written by Bob Wilkin, who's one of the founders and operators of the Grace Evangelical Society.

It's called Saints, Spurious of Secrets. He goes and looks at John chapter 2, verse 23-25. I'd like to turn there because this bears precisely on.

It was amazing the timing of this article because it fits right into our study in Romans chapter 10. So turn with me just quickly to John chapter 2, verse 23. It is a verse that I had looked at in the past and been puzzled by and never had the chance to really satisfy myself as to my understanding of it.

John chapter 2, verse 23. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew

what was in man.

I'll give you just a second to absorb and attempt to decipher what's being said there. People saw Jesus do miracles. They believed in his name.

This is the very same phrase that is used for salvation in chapter 1. To them gave he the authority to be called sons of God, even to them that believed on his name. Very same phrase. So what would we say here? These people had believed on his name.

They saw the miracles. They believed in his name. John 1, 12.

They had the authority to be called sons of God. They're saved. But what does it tell us in verse 24? Jesus did not commit himself to them.

Wow. They believe that Jesus did not commit himself to them. What can that possibly mean? That's what this article addresses by Bob Wilkins.

I will just give you a very brief summary. The verdict to most commentators is that these weren't really saved people. That's our default answer.

Well, if they don't live a good life, they probably were never saved to begin with. If they don't bear fruit, then they were never saved. And the verdict to most commentators, and he quotes a number of them, that they trusted in his name, but not all faith is saving faith.

It's the same people who will go to Hebrews 6 and say, well, they tasted the good word of God, but they didn't really partake. They didn't take a big bite out of it. Well, he points out the problems with that view.

And one of the biggest problems is that in the very same context, John 1, 12, John uses the very same phrase, believe in his name, to define what it means to have the authority to be called the son of God. So you can't very well turn around and say, well, they believed, but they didn't really believe. It just does not work.

But you're left with the question, why did Jesus not commit himself to them? Why did he not entrust himself to them? And his conclusion in this article is, Jesus only commits or entrusts himself to those who obey him. And he gives the scripture, John 14, 21. He spent a lot of time recently in John 14.

And you will recall in that context, if you want to turn there quickly, in John 14, that Jesus talks about the fact that he that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me. And he that loves me shall be loved by my father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him. What is the condition for Jesus manifesting himself, Jesus entrusting himself? It's not saving faith, is it? That's not the criteria.

That's not the condition of the promise. The condition of the promise is having his commandments and keeping them. There is a difference when you look at believers.

Some believers who are saved don't have the word of God. It's not in their heart. It's not in their mouth.

They don't pursue that as believers. And Jesus does not commit himself to them. He does not entrust himself to them.

He does not come and indwell them the way that he talks about here in John 14 and 15 when he talks about the fact that I and my father will come and will make our abode in the believer who has the commandments and keeps them, who loves God. What is Moses talking about, that the word is in your mouth and in your heart? What is Paul talking about, that the word is in your heart and in your mouth? There's no excuse for us to not have these commandments and keep them and demonstrate and exercise love toward God. And when we do that, Christ will commit himself to us, will manifest himself to us, will entrust himself to us.

Jesus saw these people who believed, but they almost get the sense that they were narrowly convinced. They saw the miracles and they said, well, this must be the Christ. But they weren't willing to commit themselves.

Remember the Pharisees? And they're quoted in this article, who believed and who yet would not publicly acknowledge that belief. Nicodemus was one of them. The scripture points out several times in the story of Nicodemus there in John 7 that he came by night.

I think it mentions it like three or four times that Nicodemus came by night. Why did he come by night? He didn't want to be identified with Jesus Christ publicly. He didn't want to confess Christ publicly.

Now, ultimately, he will. After the death of Christ, Nicodemus, along with Joseph of Arimathea, are going to go and claim the body of Christ. And Nicodemus is going to basically separate himself from the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin and all of that at that point.

But for quite a while, Nicodemus is a secret saint. He believes, but he's not willing to confess. Remember in Matthew, was it chapter 21 of Matthew, where Jesus was talking to the disciples and he says, He that confesses me before men, I will confess before my Father who is in heaven.

He that denies me before men, I will deny before my Father who is in heaven. If you go back and look at that context, it's right in the middle of a whole series of instructions about life for believers, about what it means to be a disciple and so forth. It's not a salvation thing.

Jesus isn't saying, you've got to confess before men or you're not going to be saved. This is the honor roll. This is the reward throne.

This is the place where Jesus Christ acknowledges the good and the faithful servant. Confessing Christ publicly is an act of obedience for a believer. It's not an act of faith that results in salvation.

It's a work. It's something that we do because we're convinced inside and we love God, we love Christ. Confession, verbal confession, is a forthright act of obedience by a believer and it results in acknowledgment.

When we are willing to take that step, and many of us have seen that and have come to that hurdle in our own lives, haven't we? We may have been saved for many years, but we didn't really make an issue of it in our life. And at a certain point, we decided, you know, it's make or break here. I've either got to put up or shut up.

I've got to decide whether my Christianity is going to be just one tiny item on the shelf or whether I'm going to be identified by that. I'm going to be willing to talk about God and that that was the reason I made the decision I made or that's the reason I lived the way I lived. And I'm not going to be ashamed.

I'm not going to shrink back when someone asks me, well, why are things this way? Well, because I'm claiming the promise of God. And we reach that point where we start publicly operating with the name of Christ painted on us. And we don't sort of angle around where we don't really have to make an issue of the fact that we're doing what we do and living the way we live because we're believers.

That's confession. That's bearing the name. And it's a function of discipleship, not a function of salvation.

That's what's being talked about here. And when you look at that, confessing Christ as an act of obedience as a disciple, it makes perfect sense in our context in Romans, doesn't it? If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, what have been the resurrection references that Paul has made in Romans? What application does he make of the resurrection of Christ? The death he died, he died to sin. The life he lives, he lives to God.

If you believe in your heart that God raised Christ from the dead, notice in our other salvation from the lake of fire criteria, it doesn't say anything about you've got to believe in the resurrection. It says you've got to trust Christ as your savior. The resurrection and all the attendant principles and doctrines are things that believers learn, but it's not necessary to believe in a literal physical resurrection to be saved.

You trust Christ. You claim him as the payment for your sins. It's sin, righteousness, and judgment that are a part of the gospel.

That's what the Holy Spirit convicts of. He doesn't convict of resurrection. Resurrection is an

important thing, and it's vital to understand it.

It's one of the basic doctrines given in Hebrews 6. But it is not a criteria for salvation, and we don't have to feel the requirement to include it and get someone to acknowledge it as a part of the gospel. But believing in the heart that God raised Christ from the dead has everything to do with the life he lives. The life he lives, he lives to God.

He's willing to identify with the plan of God and the person of God the Father and to be viewed in that life. That's the purpose of his life. That's his goal.

He lives his life to God. That's why he's raised. He died his death to sin.

Now he lives his life to God. That's the point. If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, he will manifest himself to us.

These people in John 2, 23-25 are saved, but they weren't willing to be disciples. Look at all of the discipleship passages. We've reviewed them in the past.

Unless a man hate his father and mother and abandon everything and come and follow me, he is not worthy to be my disciple. It doesn't say he's not worthy to be saved. He's not worthy to be a disciple.

If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. Taking up that cross is taking up a badge of identification. When people think of us, they say, Oh, he's a believer.

He's a Christian. He lives the way he lives because he believes in God. He studies the Bible all the time.

When people think of us, they immediately think, That person's a Christian. They're casting doubt in their mind. They may reach the point where they want to know about God.

They think, What Christians do I know? I know so and so. That person's a Christian. We spring to their mind as one of the first people that they associate with God.

That's confessing. That's bearing the mark. That's taking up the cross.

That's what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 10. Unfortunately, we have misapplied the principle that we have used at first to support. When we say, You've got to walk in the aisle to be saved.

You've got to tell somebody that you're saved. All these people on TV. Now, if you prayed this prayer with me, get on the phone and call.

Why do they say that? They'll use this verse to support that. We need you to verbally confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord. To complete your salvation.

It's adding works to grace. It's not a part. Scripture does not teach that.

What a wonderful thing it is to see the context of Romans. To understand what it's talking about. It's the life we live as believers.

If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus. If we believe in our heart today as Christians of long standing. That God raised him from the dead.

And that was the purpose of him. And that he lives his life to God. We will be delivered.

Our life will count. We'll be on the narrow road. Going through that narrow gate that leads to life eternal.

That leads to the reward and blessing and assurance that God has set before us. We will fulfill our purpose. We will be a vessel of honor.

That reflects the grace and the glory and the power of God. That's our calling. That's our mission.

And that word is near to us. It's in our mouth. It's in our heart.

And we have every opportunity to fulfill that as believers in this age. Let's close in prayer. Father we thank you for the fact that you have not made yourself far off.

You have drawn near to us. You have placed your word in our mouth and in our heart. We pray to God the Holy Spirit will make these things real to us.

Will remind us of them on a constant basis. And that we will have the opportunity minute by minute. Hour by hour.

Day by day. To confess our Savior Jesus Christ. To claim these things by faith.

And to be declared righteous. To be the receivers of that righteousness. To be the receivers of everything that comes with it.

The inheritance, the opportunity to reflect your glory and fulfill your purpose. Both in this age and in the ages to come. We ask all of these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.