

## WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED

We have just been singing about the amazing grace of our Lord.  
But, what must we do to receive that grace.  
What must we do to be saved.

The answer to the question posed by the title of our sermon this morning is contained in verses 9 and 10 of our reading from Romans. You might want to turn to these in your bibles as we shall be referring to them quite a lot this morning. Anyway, let me remind you of them:

“That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

According to these two verses two things are required in order to be saved. First, you must believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from death. Second, you must confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

The first test of belief in Jesus Christ is for all mankind. This is made quite clear by that most famous verse – John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” The use of the word ‘whosoever’ here makes it quite clear that this offer of the benefit - the gift of everlasting life - is for all. This gospel is offered to every person. As it says in Hebrews 2:9 “Jesus tasted death for every man”. That’s you and me! If this doctrine of the free offer of the gospel and everlasting life to all who would take it up is undermined then all the rest of Christian doctrine will fall apart. This doctrine is fundamental.

The assumption in John 3:16 is that the gospel is the only thing that can help us. Apart from that, all men will perish. The only thing which can help is the gospel. But it is the “whosoever” that believes

that is saved. All others will probably perish. Certainly they are at severe risk, although only God can ultimately judge.

However, you must believe in your heart. You must have faith. One may superficially confess that 'Jesus was raised from the dead' or that 'Jesus is Lord' without anything having taken place in the heart. The crux of the matter is here. If we do not believe in our 'heart of hearts' as we might put it today, then we are not saved. We must be convinced or persuaded. The Greek word for 'faith' in the New Testament comes from a root word that essentially means 'to persuade'. If we have faith we are persuaded, if we are not persuaded we do not have faith.

Again I say, we must believe. Whosoever believes. Belief in this context is trust, having faith, nothing more. It is not belief plus works; it is belief without works. It is just belief. As Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians "For by grace ye are saved through faith and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast" Eph 2 8:9.

So we must believe. But what must we believe in? We must believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. Thus, the supernatural element of the Christian faith comes into focus. In our age, the words of verse 9 of our reading are of particular significance. We live in an age of scientific rationalism; an age of unbelief that in many ways differs from all previous ages. Science and materialism combine to militate against belief in the supernatural in a way that previous generations have not had to combat. However, this barrier can be turned into an opportunity. An opportunity for us to demonstrate that we really believe in an almighty God of miracles.

The object of our saving faith is the resurrection of Jesus. He died a horrible death on the cross and was raised to life in the same body He had had since His birth. Yes it was a spiritual body, but it was also the same body. As we know from John's gospel chapter 20 and verse 7 the tomb in which he was laid was empty save for his grave clothes.

His resurrected body also carried the marks of his crucifixion as the disciple Thomas learned for himself.

Let's summarise where we have got to. So far we have seen that the first requirement of our salvation is belief in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, that belief in this context simply means trust or faith and that this route to salvation is open to all mankind.

Some of you might want to ask at this point, why didn't Paul stress trusting Jesus' death on the cross as the object of faith. It is certainly true that Jesus' death on the cross is the atonement for our sins. He paid the price for all the sins of the world past present and future and by his blood we are saved. Paul had already developed the doctrine of justification by faith earlier in his epistle to the Romans, principally in Chapters 3, 5 and 6. However, these earlier chapters deal mainly with WHAT saves us – Jesus' death on the cross - whilst our reading today deals with the nature of saving faith, the faith we need to have, and Paul tells us that that is faith in Jesus' resurrection. We also have some indication from Jesus himself that this is the case in his words to Thomas recorded in John chapter 20 and verse 29 "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." It seems to me that the reason for this is quite simple. It is not necessary for us to understand all the ramifications of the doctrine of justification by faith in order to be saved. This doctrine is profound – very profound. Augustine, Aquinas and Anselm – even Martin Luther – clearly did not perceive all of the implications. Should we say that these great men will not be in heaven then? NO of course not. That is why anyone who believes in Jesus' resurrection and deity will be saved.

This is an important reminder that we are not saved by how much we know. It does not take a lot of knowledge to be saved. What matters is simply that we believe and confess. That's amazing grace. That's amazing grace.

The church today (at least in the West) often emphasises the death of Christ more than His resurrection. This is probably because we now

have a clearer knowledge of justification by faith than was the case before Luther. Indeed, it is probably right that our evangelism should begin with the forgiveness of sins through the death of Jesus Christ. Paul certainly encourages such an approach. However, we must not allow this to obscure the clear statement of what saving faith is or to be intolerant or judgmental of those who do not understand doctrines such as propitiation and atonement.

I repeat again, we don't need to have a lot of knowledge to be saved. Yet again, because this can't be emphasised enough, we don't need to have a lot of knowledge to be saved.

At this point, let's return to our verses 9 and 10 once again. We see that anyone can be saved who truly believes that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead if he also confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord. These are two separate conditions, both of which must be fulfilled. That is why Paul joined these conditions with AND in his epistle.

We might ask 'is it possible to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and yet refuse to confess him as Lord'. I have to answer that I believe that it is. There are several biblical examples of this. There were guards at the tomb when Jesus was raised from the dead. How much they actually witnessed is not known. But it is undoubted that they knew that he had been raised. They knew that Jesus' disciples had nothing to do with the tomb being empty. They knew it in their hearts. Indeed, they told this to the authorities - the chief priests. There is every reason to believe that the chief priests believed the soldiers, for when news of this reached the Sanhedrin (who had ordered Jesus' execution) the Sanhedrin called a meeting. Did they then confess Jesus as Lord? No, not at all. Did the soldiers themselves confess Jesus as Lord? No not at all. Instead, the soldiers accepted a bribe to keep quiet about what they knew to be a fact, as is recounted in Matthew's gospel in chapter 28 verses 12-15.

The same thing can be said of Jesus' death on the cross. It is possible for a person to accept this, even to accept it as atonement for our sins, and yet refuse to confess that Jesus is Lord.

I also believe that the converse is possible. Some will confess Jesus as Lord but not believe that He was raised from the dead. One may say "Jesus is Lord" one may come forward or walk up an aisle – even in front of thousands. But these things are not enough. Equally, it is not enough, by itself, to be baptised.

That is precisely why the apostle Paul said 'if'. He was explaining that salvation depends on two conditions: belief and confession. BOTH of these must be present or there is no saving faith. This is the scandal of the Christian faith. Christ died for all but not all are saved. The doctrine of salvation is universal – open to all. All are invited but not all choose to respond. It is our choice. Those who respond are saved those who do not are lost. This may not be fashionable doctrine in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century but Jesus' words in Mark 16 verse 16 "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" cannot be ignored.

Lets turn now to the second requirement for salvation: confession that Jesus is Lord. In our verses 9 and 10 Paul mentions confession with the mouth twice. It seems clear that a person must TELL IT if he believes and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. As it says in Psalm 107 "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so". Jesus himself said "Whosoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whosoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."

It is as though confessing openly and verbally with our mouths ratifies our salvation. It validates it. It sets it into operation.

Baptism is one means of public confession. However, although good and useful baptism is apparently not essential to salvation. The thief on the cross was not baptised, but he confessed Jesus as Lord and Jesus said to him "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in

paradise.” But there are good reasons why we should all be baptised. It dignifies the ordinance which Jesus gave to the church and it is a beautiful and public demonstration that one truly is not ashamed to be identified with Jesus’ death and resurrection.

So what must we confess. We must confess that Jesus is Lord, the son of God. What is at stake here is the vindication of God’s name and honour. In any event, it is only a matter of time. At the last every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Thus it is not a question whether we will confess Jesus Is Lord. It is only a question of when. Lets do that now whilst we may still benefit from our confession.

There are some who will not confess here and now that Jesus Christ is Lord and there is good reason for this. As it says in I Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 3 “ No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit”. Thus confessing that Jesus is Lord is an affirmation of his deity and honour.

If we must both believe in the resurrection of Jesus and also confess that He is Lord, which comes first. Paul puts it one way in verse 9 of our reading and in the opposite way in verse 10. However, it seems that the order expressed in verse 10 is correct. First we inwardly believe in the resurrection and then we publicly tell of our belief in Jesus. I don’t believe it is necessary that it must be that way, but I do believe that this is the logical progression and the way that we develop in our faith.

Having discussed at some length what we must do to be saved, what does it mean to be saved? Simply it means that one is preserved from hell. To be saved is to go to heaven to be in paradise with our Father when our earthly body dies. Certainly salvation is these things, but it is so much more. It is to enter into a new relationship with our Father that will immeasurably enrich our lives – starting right from the moment of confession!

I think we have reached the time to finally sum up what we have brought out this morning. We see that our salvation does not depend on what we do, or say, or know. Our works are as nothing. All we need to understand and do is to truly believe in the resurrection of Jesus and to publicly proclaim that he is our Lord, the Son of God. If we do these two things nothing else we do or do not do can add anything to or subtract anything from our glorious salvation.

Let's bow our heads for a word of prayer

Heavenly Father thank you that you have made our salvation so simple that even a child may understand. I pray that all who hear your words will accept your salvation even now this very day.  
Amen.