

• *The message of the gospel is close at hand*

People in ancient times longed to explore the heavenly realms and discover its secrets on a heavenly journey. But men and women do not have to make a journey to heaven. Jesus has already made a journey to earth. We do not have to climb into the heights to find God. Jesus has come down to find us. Salvation speaks to us. ⁸*But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart'— that is, the word of faith which we preach.* The 'word' is the message of the gospel. It is close at hand. It is inviting us to accept Jesus and to speak out concerning him.

Saving faith has content

(i) *Response to God's word*

(ii) *Accepting the truth that Jesus died and rose again*

(iii) *Trustful conviction*

Now Paul tells what it is that he preaches. ⁹*We preach that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.* If we want to experience salvation we confess with our lips something that is happening in our hearts. ¹⁰*For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.* (i) Saving faith is a matter of responding to God's word. (ii) It involves accepting the truth that Jesus is the Lord, and that Jesus is alive. There is content to saving faith. It is believing 'that' certain things are true and trustworthy. Faith is not a leap into the dark. It is a leap into the light. (iii) Faith involves trustful conviction. To believe 'in the heart' means that you are convinced. It is not simply understanding an idea. You can understand something without believing it.

We believe that Jesus is Lord, the divine Messiah of the Old Testament. We come to be persuaded that Jesus died and rose again. These two items are the content of saving faith. This is how we receive salvation ourselves and this is what we preach for others to be saved.

There is evidence for saving faith

• *Public acknowledgement of what has happened*

• *To believe is easy!*

• *Calls to good works are to those who have believed*

Just as there is content to saving faith, there is also evidence for saving faith. We have seen that faith involves trustful conviction. The conviction is so gripping that the person with true faith is willing to confess, to publicly acknowledge, what has happened to him. 'For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation'¹¹. It is easy to believe! How staggering the message of free salvation is – and how easily it is misplaced by the church! There are plenty of calls to 'good works' in the Bible, but they are addressed to those who have come to salvation **without** good works. God accepts us as we are when we respond to the easy call of Jesus to believe that in and through the cross there is forgiveness and a **gift** of Someone Else's righteousness. It is when we have believed that we rejoice in God's salvation; we receive power we never had before. Then we are ready for 'good works'!

¹¹ 10:10

The gospel is available for everyone

Verses 11–13 take a step forward in the argument. Paul has urged that faith is a very simple matter. His new point in 10:11–13 is: this gospel is available to everyone. The law was always for Israel only; the gospel is for every person in the human race.

¹¹*For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.'* The key word is 'everyone'. The law was specially

• *The law was specially designed for Israel ahead of the gospel – for everyone*

• *No distinctions*

• *It is necessary to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*

• *Salvation is not automatic*

• *Preaching leads to hearing, then believing, then justification*

• *The name of Jesus – He answers*

designed for Israel, but the gospel is specially designed for 'everyone'. Actually it is supremely designed for the poor and needy – but the not-so-poor and not-so-needy are invited as well. Everyone who believes in him will never be put to shame. ¹²*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon him.* The differences among men and women are relatively unimportant Paul had said once before back in Romans 3:22. There he was saying, 'There is no distinction' because all have sinned. Now he says, 'there is no distinction . . . for the same Lord is Lord of all . . . ' There is no difference in that all need salvation; there is no difference in the gospel available to everyone. But it is necessary to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not automatic. Jesus is rich towards everyone who calls on him. ¹³*For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.* It is a quotation from Joel 2:32, where a day of salvation is predicted. The person who has come to faith 'calls upon' the name of Jesus. The preaching leads to hearing, which leads to believing, which leads to justification, which leads to calling on the name of Jesus, which leads to the flowing blessings of 'salvation'. 'Calling' is praying from a sense of need. It is when Jesus is appealed to. Paul himself was told to call on the name of Jesus at the time of his baptism; he was told this calling on the name of the Lord would wash away his sins¹⁴. We call upon Jesus because we realize the terrible trouble that sin and Satan bring upon us. The 'name' of the Lord is Jesus' radiating, active, shining presence and power. What happens as we call upon the name of Jesus is that he answers us. When we come to salvation, we first are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. We become acceptable to God because our sinfulness is 'covered' before him as we come into his presence. We call upon him and in answer to our cries he cleanses our conscience, gives us relief from guilt, and breaks the power of sin.

1 Acts 22:16



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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