



Daily Faith Practices

Sunday, August 7-13 (A) – Romans 10:5-15

Focus: *Lips, Heart, and Feet*

word of life

“... if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9 NRSV)

Read Romans 10:5-15

The Apostle Paul continues his letter to the community of believers in Rome with the third of three teachings comparing the righteousness found under works of the law with the righteousness found through faith in Jesus Christ. The term *righteousness* is often described as *right relations with God*. Before his conversion, Paul had been a Pharisee—an ardent follower of the Law of Moses. He knew the commandments by heart and acted zealously in following them. His life was ordered in an attempt to earn God’s favor—to attain righteousness with God through what Paul did. Paul references Leviticus 18:5 to describe this righteousness that comes from the law: “...the person who does these things will live by them.” (Romans 10:5 NRSV)

1. *How do people still attempt to earn God’s love and favor?*
2. *What problems are encountered with this attempt?*

In contrast, Paul describes the righteousness that comes from faith by paraphrasing Deuteronomy 30:11-14: “‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:8b-9 NRSV)

3. *In what ways is this understanding of righteousness freeing?*
4. *Why is it difficult to truly trust in righteousness that comes from faith?*

For Paul, it is at the intersection of justice and grace that we come to know righteousness and salvation. Left to our own efforts, we fall short. Our attempts to earn God’s favor come up empty—broken promises, broken relationships, failed attempts to do and be faithful. We can’t on our own achieve righteousness. But God in Christ puts the believer into a right relationship with God. All we need do is to believe and trust in God’s grace given for all to receive. “For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:14 NRSV)

For Paul, this undeserved, unearned, radical grace was life-changing and transforming. He went from persecuting the followers of Christ to become the apostle to the Gentiles, proclaiming this incredible good news to all the world. And we are called to do the same. We do so, not to earn God’s favor and righteousness, but to share this good news **for** everyone **to** everyone. Our passage for today concludes with a series of rhetorical questions pointing to the importance of the call to proclamation. Even though all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, Paul asks, “But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15 And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14-15 NRSV)

5. *How would you answer the questions asked by Paul?*

The call is clear. We proclaim, not to gain acceptance from God or to earn righteousness, but we tell the message of grace—in our hearts, with our lips and our lives—because we have been saved by God in Christ Jesus. Paul writes a final word of blessing by quoting Isaiah 52:7: “As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:15 NRSV) How beautiful indeed!

word *among us*

Enrique was perplexed. His assignment from his voice teacher was to learn a beautiful Italian aria for his upcoming recital. He had worked hard on memorizing the words and learning the music. But as he was singing the aria in rehearsal, his teacher stopped him. “Something just isn’t right,” she said. “You know the words and you’ve mastered the music. But something is missing.”

She paused and then asked Enrique, “Do you know what the song is about? It’s an expression of love and beauty. The melody soars in the aria; there is passion and ecstasy in the lyrics and the music. What you are singing is transforming and life-changing to the listener. Try it again, but this time, sing what’s in your heart. Believe that what you are singing is important and true. Don’t just sing the words. Believe them. Live them. Tell the world about your beloved and the love you’ve experienced.”

1. *Think of a time when you’ve heard a song sung from the heart. Describe it.*
2. *What makes the difference?*

Like Enrique, we, too, have worked hard memorizing the words of faith (literally for some confirmation students, and figuratively for all). We yearn to know the melody of God’s favor. Yet too often, we try and sing it on our own. But something is missing in our efforts. We miss the meaning, and our efforts are out of tune with God’s righteousness.

The good news is that God doesn’t leave us to our own dissonant attempts to make the melody right. Paul expresses that good news in beautiful lyrics: “... if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:8b-9 NRSV) Confess with your lips; believe in your heart. And proclaim to the message to all the world. “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:15 NRSV)

3. *How does it feel to have God’s song in your heart?*
4. *How do your words reflect the content of your heart?*

faith practice *in daily life*

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

The tagline for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the ELCA) is, “God’s work. Our hands.” Today’s verses from Romans expand that calling to include other body parts—lips, heart, and feet. It is God’s work in Jesus Christ that makes things right in our relationship with God. We are called to proclaim with our lips what we believe in our heart. Our feet are to send us out to be messengers of the good news of God’s amazing grace. It is our calling. God’s work. Our hands. Our lips. Our heart. Our feet.

5. *What part of this passage do you hope to remember throughout the coming week?*

Prayer

We give you thanks, O Loving God, for your saving grace. Send us your Holy Spirit, that we might be empowered to confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord, to believe in our heart that Christ was raised from the dead, and to be sent us out into the world to proclaim the good news. Amen

last word

Be God’s hands, lips, heart, and feet
in your daily life.

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