

The Anatomy of Faith II

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[0 : 00] the 10th chapter of Romans, and we'll be looking at verses 4 through 13.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows. 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.

But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart. That is, the word of faith which we are preaching.

[1 : 17] 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.

For with the heart, a person believes, resulting in righteousness. And with the mouth, he confesses, resulting in salvation.

For the scripture says, whoever believes in him will not be disappointed. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.

For the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on him.

For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. Great passage, great verse.

[2 : 29] Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. Saved from what? Saved how?

Really good word, and it's one that the scriptures use over and over again. Saved from what? And it has to do with rescue, with deliverance.

We're all familiar with an organization called the Salvation Army. And most people don't know anything about the origins of this, but it was founded by a general William Booth back in the 1800s.

And he founded it on the premise of the salvation of souls and the preaching of the gospel to win men and women to Jesus Christ.

And I can remember, although I don't see this anymore, and I don't know if they've changed their methodology or what, but I can remember as a younger man, not just Christmas time, but just about any time of the year, if you were to venture downtown, you might go past a busy street corner on a Saturday afternoon when lots of the farmers were in the town doing business and whatnot.

[3 : 47] And there's a little musical combo set up over there on the corner. Maybe a trumpet and clarinet and somebody with a couple of drums. And the lassies, they called them Salvation Army lassies, they're in their garb and their bonnet and their gown and their dress and everything.

And they would sing hymns and present the gospel. And this was called the Salvation Army. And the whole idea that General William Booth had behind this was that these men and women who did this, who stood on the street corners and proclaimed the gospel and provided food baskets for the needy, etc., that these people were to constitute a whole army of believers who were engaged in spiritual conflict and were there on that street corner for the sole purpose of introducing people, passers-by, to the Salvation Army.

And, you know, over the years, many of them, in many instances, just became the butt of jokes. And people would make fun of them and think that they were just a bunch of fanatics out there on the street corner trying to raise some money for whatever and really not pay a whole lot of attention to them.

But over the past several years, the Salvation Army, I think, has gained a new status in the minds of many Americans because they have performed some really stellar functions and rescues.

And they have been an important vehicle for charitable giving for a lot of people. They have been able to maintain their organizational integrity over the years. They have what they call citadels.

[5 : 31] They don't call them churches. But they call them citadels that are established all over the country and in some other countries. And their emphasis is upon reaching man with his spiritual needs by meeting his material and physical needs.

And as I said earlier, the concept is it's difficult to preach the gospel to a man on an empty stomach. So very often they engage in those ilio-misonary activities of donation of food supplies and the furniture and the clothing and the goods and shelter and all kinds of things like that for the poor and needy, the people who are down and out.

And the whole premise behind it is the realization that even though they are doing what they can to meet people's physical needs, there's a lot greater need.

And that's your eternal need. That's your spiritual need. That's that void that each person has in their own heart that nothing can fill but the God who made it.

He's the only one who can fill it. And people try to fill it with money. It won't work. They try to fill it with fame. They try to fill it with sex. They try to fill it with drugs.

[6 : 49] They try to fill it with alcohol. Try everything. Try anything but the real thing that will really do the job. And that, of course, is a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

Can you imagine anyone else ever being able to say, He who drinks of the water that I give him shall never thirst again. Can you imagine anybody saying that? Anybody but the one who did?

Can you imagine anyone but him saying, I am the light of the world? And being able to back it up? You know anybody else who could make a statement like that?

What this Bible is all about, of course, is what Jesus Christ is all about. And that's what the church is supposed to be all about. And when it comes to placing your confidence, your trust, where it really matters, so that you know you will not ultimately be embarrassed or ashamed for having done so, so you don't ever have to worry about having made a bad decision.

Oh boy, I wish I hadn't done that. You don't ever have to worry about that. You can put your confidence and your trust in this one who was able to say, before Abraham was, I am.

[8 : 06] In this one who was able to say, He who believes in me, even though he dies, yet shall he live again. Who else can make a statement like that? Who would have the nerve to make a statement like that?

Other than Jesus Christ. So, we are impelled in Scripture and compelled in Scripture when looking for an object in whom you can, or a person in whom you can put your faith and trust without ever having to worry about regretting it.

He's the only one that qualifies. You won't find anybody else. No priest, no preacher, no rabbi, no guru, no anybody can meet the qualifications that are required for that kind of a situation.

So, we are talking about the dynamics of personal faith and belief, and I was remarking to Marie this morning, as we were driving on our way to church, I thought, here we were, and I thought, this is really ironic.

Here we are going to a church that I have pastored for the last 40 years, and the subject of the morning is belief, faith.

[9 : 30] Have we accomplished anything in 40 years? Is this a huge step backwards or what? I mean, this is so basic, so elemental.

So, if it's that basic and that elemental, and that easily understood and that simple, why are we spending the time on it? Because there is something afoot here.

And I'm not real sure what it is, and I'm trying to find out. And what I mean when I say something is afoot is that as much as the gospel of the grace of God is proclaimed in as many different venues, and as many people as there are who claim to believe, precious little is being realized by way of an outcome.

We are not having much of an impact. The world is not sitting up and taking notice of the Christian community. The world is tolerating the Christian community.

And in some places, it isn't even willing to do that. So, it almost gives me the impression that, as we talked about in our first session, there is belief, and then there is belief.

[10 : 47] And the text that Gary read this morning from Romans 10 deals with, if you believe in your heart, that God has raised him from the dead. Well, how else can you believe?

What else is there to believe? Well, we talked a little bit about believing in your head. We call that easy believism. This is the kind of belief that a lot of people have.

A lot of people have. And you'll hear them say things, well, I believe in God. As if they're doing God a huge favor. I believe in God.

And my response often is, big deal. So does the devil. He believes in God too. So, what does it mean to believe? To believe to the salvation of the soul.

Make no mistake about it. The scriptures, the scriptures make it very clear that when someone puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, they undergo a radical transformation on the inside that manifests itself outwardly in their behavior.

[12 : 04] in a changed attitude, changed lifestyle, changed norms and values. Everything's changed. You undergo a process of regeneration.

That means a renewing on the inside. I don't know how this happens. I don't know how God does this. But somehow, he gets inside of us in our human spirit and he makes it all new.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. So, someone who comes to faith and belief in the biblical way is a changed person.

And I want to make a very emphatic point here. They are not changed because they are trying to change and they are not changed because they are doing better or making a greater effort.

[13 : 15] They are changed because God changed them. They didn't do it. And they can't do it. But God changes us. We don't know how he does that. We just know that he does.

And if that really takes place, there is no way in the world that you can stifle it or muffle it or keep it underground. It's going to come out. It's going to manifest itself.

It just has to. It's just part of your new nature. And it manifests itself in all kinds of ways. As I've already mentioned. And one of them, of course, has to do with a love for the Lord and a love for the scriptures and a love for the people of God.

And it's just everything is new. This is why Jesus Christ called it being born again. You just start all over. It's just a whole new life. And you begin this new life in a right relationship with the God who made you that you never had before.

And you might not have even known that you didn't have it before. So why is it that this belief for some people who say they believe doesn't seem to take?

[14 : 32] It doesn't seem to take. I don't know what else to call it. It's almost like for them it didn't work. And everybody's puzzled as to why it didn't work because they said they believed.

And you can't call them a liar. You can't look into their heart and see whether or not faith is really there. You just take them at face value but you kind of scratch your head. Boy, I wonder. And so and so.

And he professes to be a Christian. How could he? I don't understand it. Now we have to make room for untaught Christians because we have a slew of them in the body of Christ everywhere.

I mean, probably the body of Christ is more untaught than it is taught. So I'm not saying that we all have to be spiritual giants or we're not saved.

I'm not saying anything of the kind. But there has to be this change. Sometimes, sometimes people only think they made a decision.

[15 : 37] But they didn't make a decision at all. I remember years ago, it was probably 25 years ago, a mother brought a little five-year-old daughter into my office and introduced me to her and said, this is my daughter so-and-so and she named her.

And I said, well, young lady, what can I do for you this morning? And her mother spoke up on her behalf and said, I've been talking to her and she's been talking to me about salvation and about believing in Jesus and she says she wants to be saved.

So I brought her in here to talk to you, like bring her to the expert, you know, that kind of thing. So I sat her down there and I thought, well, this is delightful.

This is a precious thing. A little sweet five-year-old girl and wants to come to faith in Jesus and that's great. That's going to make my day. And I talked to her and I said, well, now, honey, tell me, what is it that attracts you about Jesus and why do you want to be saved?

And she was kind of shy, you know, kind of sugary. And I said, well, I'm really glad, I'm really glad that you want to be saved but I need to know why is it that you want to be saved?

[17 : 00] And she just kind of hem-hulled and shuffled her feet around, you know, and I just, I didn't want to discourage her in any way or embarrass her but it was really important for me to know what was going on in that little mind and heart of hers.

And finally, after some more investigation, she said, I want the juice and crackers.

And I thought, what? I looked over my desk, I didn't see any juice and crackers there. And her mother said, well, she said, I think she might be talking about our communion service last week.

I said, oh, oh, well, were you thinking about when we had the communion service and little tiny glasses and the grape juice and she said, yeah, she says, I want to be saved so I can have the juice and crackers because mommy told me that the juice and crackers was just for people who were saved, for Christians.

Okay. Well, now I was on the spot, you know. And I remember talking to her and trying to explain to her the gospel in as simple a terms as I could, but I felt the urge not to press this little girl into making a decision and I didn't and as it turned out, she did come to know the Lord but it was maybe a year later when she had a better understanding.

[18 : 47] And you know, parents, the only thing that you as a parent can take to heaven with you is your children.

It's the only thing you can take with you. It's your children. And as a loving parent, you are deeply, deeply concerned about the spiritual well-being and the eternal destiny of your children.

There is a heaven and there is a hell and scriptures make that very, very clear. And that line of separation is belief or unbelief. And it's very possible that an overzealous parent really deeply desiring the best for their child and thinking in terms of their salvation and their own good, the parent can unwisely push the child into making a decision and all the child is really doing is pleasing their parents.

But they don't understand enough to make an intelligent decision. And I told you last week about kids who come to Cedarville University and it isn't just Cedarville.

It's Christian schools all throughout the country. And a lot of them in the fall, they have evangelistic services for so-called Christian kids. And every year, there's a fresh batch who said, well, you know, I thought I was saved when I was seven years old and went to camp, but I didn't understand what it was all about.

[20 : 29] And I just went forward with my other friends and the camp counselor said, okay, you're saved now. So I said, well, okay, I'm saved. But they weren't. They didn't understand.

And there are certain things that you have to know and understand. Not a lot. It's not difficult and it's not complicated. It is so simple that a child can understand.

And there have been many instances of children saved at the tender age of four and five and they made an absolute, downright, dead-on decision for Christ and they knew exactly what they were doing and they were as saved as anybody.

But there are also children who are misled and who think that they have come to faith because mom or dad told them, now, now you're saved.

Now you're a Christian. So they just kind of, okay, so you say so. Youth for Christ, there's a Christian organization evangelistic years ago that used to have a great outreach for young people and they would give an altar call and have a high-powered evangelist come in and preach traumatic messages and kids would flock down front and get saved.

[21 : 40] But I've talked to some of those kids since. Years later and some of them have told me stories like, well, you know, I was in with this in crowd at school and they gave the invitation and, boy, I didn't want to go down there.

I didn't want anything to do. I didn't want this business of believing in God and giving my life to Him. I didn't want anything to do with that. But you know what happened? The captain of the football team, the coolest guy in town, coolest guy in the school, he went down.

And a couple of the other guys on the team went down. And I guess I just went forward because they did. They were the cool kids and I wanted to be one of them. And this is pure influence and pure pressure.

And if you make a decision on the basis of a decision that somebody else made, it's not yours. It doesn't belong to you. It's a second generation thing and it doesn't count. It doesn't work that way.

It has to be a personal thing and you have to know what it is you believe and why you believe before it has that taking power, that transforming power, before it really takes hold of you and changes you.

[22 : 57] And as I've said, I don't think that there is some special complicated formula or something that you have to know that's very difficult. They're just some basic things but you have to know these.

And they have to be involved in the formula. And if they're not, I don't see how the salvation can be anything but questionable. And what I'm talking about, some of those things that you have to know, and then we'll look at another passage here in Romans.

First of all, there has to be personal responsibility and culpability in place.

You have to have some appreciation of the fact that you are at odds with God. That you are not what He wants you to be.

And that you can't be in and of yourself because if you could have, you would have a long time ago. So this personal accountability thing has to be in place.

[24 : 06] We have to have a recognition of being unacceptable the way we are. And the truth of the matter is we are all without exception unacceptable the way we are.

Someone says, that doesn't include preachers, does it? I say, especially preachers. And if you don't have that, if you don't have that sense of not being right with God, you're not going to do anything to be right with Him.

Because you think you're already okay. Well, you're not. And the Scriptures say you're not. You're not okay unless Jesus Christ is dwelling in you.

And if He is, that's what makes you okay. It's not you. It's not your behavior. It's not your goodness. So this has to be in place and you have to have an awareness of this.

Because if you do not have a personal conviction of your own personal sin and shortcoming, what do you need a Savior for? And this is exactly where a lot of people are today.

[25 : 23] Maybe even the majority of our nation. Everybody is okay the way they are. Religious pluralism has taught us that.

And if there is that, if there is that in place, a personal awareness of being unacceptable to God because of our sin, if there is that, then there has to be the element of repentance.

And while we're right next door to Romans, let's come over to Acts chapter 17, just the next book back. Acts chapter 17, a passage that we're familiar with but it says it so clearly.

I want to bring it into play right now. Paul is on Mars Hill talking to the Athenian philosophers. and he says in chapter 17, in verse 30, therefore, God having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

the only thing anybody ever has to repent about is being wrong. Because the word repent means change your mind.

[26 : 44] And the only reason you should change your mind about anything is that you discover that you've been wrong about something. And now, you understand and you know what it is that you've been wrong about.

So are you going to change your mind about that thing? That's what it means to repent. And you can apply this repentance to what we were just talking about. Here is a person who thought that they were okay and acceptable to God mainly because they've never robbed any banks, they've never killed anybody, they've never done anything really terrible in their whole life and they've basically tried to be a nice guy and help everybody.

And that's what they're counting on. That's all wrong. I'm telling you that it's wrong. The Bible's telling you that it's wrong because it is not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He has saved us.

So now that you know that's wrong, are you going to maintain that position or are you going to change your mind? If you change your mind and say, wow, I didn't know that.

Now I know that. Now God tells me that that's wrong. All right? Are you going to hang in there and maintain your old position regardless and say, oh this is what I've always believed and I'm going to die believing it?

[28 : 09] That's not repentance. That's being unrepentant. But if you say, on the basis of this new information that I have heard from the Word of God, I now know my position wherein I thought I was okay to be wrong and I want to reverse myself.

I want to change my mind. That's repentance. You cannot be saved without repenting. You cannot. No one can.

Because in order to come to Jesus Christ, you have to reverse yourself regarding a number of issues. Beginning with the one we just mentioned. And when you repent, you say, I've got new information.

I have a reason to change my mind. That's all we do. When the gospel is preached, this is why it's called news. It's called good news. And news is something you didn't know before.

That's what makes it news. If it's old, it is news. It's history. Good news means hearing something that you didn't know before and it is good.

[29 : 18] And this is the best good news there is. The best good news there is is you are not acceptable. You cannot clean yourself up and make yourself acceptable to God. But Jesus Christ is fully aware of that and he loves you despite yourself and he gave himself to pay the price that you couldn't pay.

And he's willing to be your savior if you're willing to trust him. you tell me that's not good news. But you can't get there if you don't change your mind.

That's why you can't be saved by repentance. And you know, you are not saved by repenting but you cannot be saved without repenting because you cannot believe without changing your mind because when you change your mind you come from unbelief to belief.

That's a change of mind. that's as big a change as you will ever make and the most important one you will ever make. So repentance has to be in place and there has to be coupled with that of course and these things often happen simultaneously when someone does come to faith an admission an acknowledgement a confession of sin must be in place and all of that goes with the repentant thing.

This is all part of the same package because when you confess your sin the word confess in the Greek is the word homo h-o-m-o legeo l-e-g-e-o homo legeo and it means to say the same words to speak the same words homo means of the same whether it is of the same sex or whether you're talking about homogenized milk or whatever homo means the same and legeo means to speak the same or to say the same so when you confess your sin you agree that's what the word homo legeo means to confess means to agree you agree with God about your sin you do not defend it you do not deny it and you certainly are not proud of it you have to have this disdain for it that too is repentance do you know what people do with their sin who will not repent of their sin and why they will not repent of their sin the answer is simple they love it they love it they're in bed with it they want it they enjoy it they propagate it they promote it they indulge in it it's their lifestyle for them it's fun and games and that's all that it's about you're not going to find any repentance with those people why should they change their mind about something that they love and embrace

[32 : 34] Christ said in John 1 John 3 that men will not come to the light because their deeds are evil and men love darkness rather than light that's why the majority of our crimes are committed after dark when they can't be seen by the light of day the human heart engaged in sin loves darkness and loves sin loves unrighteousness we're comfortable with it it's part of our nature it's what we are leave me alone don't try to force your values on me this is where the world is the whole world lies and John tells us the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one think of that and Paul wrote to the

Corinthians he said if our gospel be hid you know there are places where the gospel doesn't get there are places where it doesn't penetrate where it is not welcome period don't bring that religious stuff around here if our gospel be hid it is hid to those who are lost whose minds minds that's their thinking processes the thing they would use to change their mind if they wanted to change their mind that's it whose minds the god of this age has blinded blinded it means intellectually they can't see they reason and think with a warped intellect that leads them to wrong conclusions and wrong conclusions lead to wrong actions and wrong actions lead to wrong consequences and people can assign themselves to a life of abject misery because they make one bad decision after another and it's their only modus operandi it's all they know they're just locked into it and the only way out is through the gospel the human plight the human plight is so serious and so deep and so pervasive and so grabbing and clutching and holding and will not let you go and the only thing that can free you from that is God himself takes the power of

God and that's why Paul said I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God through faith unto salvation to everyone who believes wow that good news to everyone who believes to believe in the core of your being to believe out of a sense of personal need to believe because you have a desire to repent to change your mind you want a change of direction and you know you can't do it but you're willing to let God do it if he will and he will and he will and there has to be an awareness of the substitution principle that has to be in place cannot be omitted it is the very core of the gospel Paul said I delivered unto you that which I first of all received how that

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that he was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures and if you leave that part out of the formula you don't have a gospel because the very heartbeat of the gospel is Christ died for our sins he died in place of us he died for us he died as our substitute you've got to understand that and if you try to come to Christ without seeing him as the sin bearer savior of your soul you cannot have an adequate belief because your belief has to incorporate Christ dying for your sin in your place and if that isn't there in your mind and heart there's no way that you can have an acceptable belief that will change your life or regenerate your soul now these are not many things but they are very very important and I see them as key ingredients absolutely essential to what real belief actually is we saw earlier how that the Ethiopian eunuch in

Acts chapter 8 was baptized and he asked Philip if he could be baptized and Philip said well you can if you believe with all your heart and the Ethiopian eunuch said I believe that Jesus is the son of God and Philip says it's good enough and he took him down they got down to the water and he baptized him let me tell you something that isn't good enough now that isn't good enough now and the reason it isn't good enough now is because the Ethiopian eunuch did not include in his confession of faith I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and that he died for the sins you don't find that there you don't find that there because I don't think he understood that at that point I don't think hardly anybody understood that at that point but it was with the surfacing of

[38 : 57] Paul the apostle who began to really define what took place on that cross when Jesus Christ was there and believing in Christ involves a whole lot more than believing that he is the son of God as I said earlier even the devil believes that but I can promise you one thing the devil has not placed his personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as his sin bearer substitute you can be sure of that he hadn't done that and he won't and he can't but you can so that substitution principle that was premature for the Ethiopian eunuch and he didn't understand it but I'm convinced that he was saved in an Old Testament sense because he believed in accordance with the information that was available to him at the time and God accepted that and I want to close with this thought because this is really really really important listen don't think for a moment that you have to be theological precise original language all the rest of that you don't need any of that what you need is a position a condition of your heart that's what

God reads and he's the only one who is able to really read your heart and God knows what is really there and if your intent however confused you may be or however confused I have made you if your intent is to come into a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ and you want him as your savior don't worry about crossing T's and dotting I's and all the rest of it because God reads the heart he knows what is there and if you have the right heart attitude before the Lord if you want to know the truth and you want to open yourself to him I can assure you God will hear and God will come in and God will revitalize and regenerate and change and he will make you a new person in Christ and he will give you eternal life he will cleanse you of your sins he will pardon you he will forgive you he will give you a new destiny if the heart is right would you pray with me please father this message has been around for so long and has been proclaimed in so many venues and yet every time it goes forth it is new to somebody it's good news and fresh news to somebody and we don't know whether any of those somebodies are here this morning but they may well be you know because you know the hearts of every one of us and our hearts desire is for everyone who leaves this place this morning to be able to go forth from here saying

I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I committed unto him against that day I want more than anything for Jesus Christ to be my savior I want him to apply what he accomplished on that cross to my account and I just want to open myself and make myself fully available to him Lord Jesus Christ if as the scripture said you died on that cross because you loved me and you want me with you for eternity and you paid for my sins I want your payment put to my account because I could never make that payment myself thank you thank you for dying in my stead right here and now as best as I know how with all my questions and doubts and confusion

I know one thing I know I want Jesus Christ to be my savior I want a new life I want forgiveness I admit my guilt and my sin I want all that you have to offer me here am I thank you for doing for me what I could never do for myself dear friend if you've made that your prayer this morning I can assure you that God reads the heart and God will answer he has never ever turned away anyone who has come to him through his son Jesus Christ and he'll not turn you away either he wants you to surrender submit your will to him by believing on him and trusting him for everything trust that you'll do that this morning and if you haven't done it you'll give serious thought to it before you lay your head on the pillow tonight you will take care of this most important business if you haven't already it has eternal consequences thank you father for the privilege of proclaiming this ever old ever new gospel and its implications there's still so much about it that we don't understand but we understand enough to use it we thank you for it in Christ's wonderful name amen we have 60 seconds left do you have a question a question or a comment anyone before we dismiss well I want to thank you for being here this morning and especially for any visitors who may be with us thank you for coming and sharing your morning with us and I want to assure you that I have some wonderful literature items available for anybody who may have made such a decision and wants to get their

Christian life off to a good start I'd be delighted to help you I've got some literature that would be encouraging to you so be sure to see me before you leave and don't forget our Christmas banquet tonight it'll be a delicious time of memory building and look forward to seeing you all you're dismissed