



SESSION 5

ONE GREAT COMMITMENT

▶ **The Point**

To be saved, I must trust in Christ.

▶ **The Passage**

Romans 10:1-3,8b-13

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Life is full of decisions—lots of them. Columbia researcher Sheena Iyengar estimates that we make about 70 decisions every day. Do the math and that's around 25,500 decisions a year—or about 1,788,500 decisions if you live 70 years.⁴

- ▶ Some decisions come easy. *Yes, I will marry you!*
- ▶ Some decisions carry small consequences. *Do I order the chicken salad or the tuna salad?*
- ▶ Some decisions bring lots of stress. *Do I take the better job even though the move will uproot my family?*

The biggest decisions are life-changing, even eternal. The greatest decision we will ever make centers on what we will do with Jesus Christ. Knowing about Jesus is not enough. Our need for salvation is answered in Jesus, but we each must decide whether we will commit to that truth and trust Him—or not. In his letter to the Romans, Paul emphasized the critical importance of this decision. It's the choice of a lifetime.

▶ **The Setting**

Paul had already discussed the universality of human sin and the possibility of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross. In Romans 9–11, Paul expressed his concern about the situation of unbelieving Jews. Although most readers today are not Jewish, Paul's emphasis on the need to make a decision about Jesus as personal Lord and Savior is relevant to all.

What does the Bible say?

Them (v. 1,2)—Paul was referring to the Jewish people of his day who had failed to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Romans 10:1-3,8b-13

¹ Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation!

² I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

³ Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God’s righteousness.

^{8b} The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. This is the message of faith that we proclaim:

⁹ If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰ One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.

¹¹ Now the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on Him will not be put to shame,

¹² for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord of all is rich to all who call on Him.

¹³ For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 10:1-3 Commentary

[Verse 1] Paul was writing primarily to believers in Rome, which is why he addressed them as **Brothers**. As Christians, they could understand his personal anxiety about the failure of many Jews to receive the gospel message. We can feel Paul's anguish, as well. His **heart's desire and prayer to God** was that fellow Jews would receive the gospel. If they continued to reject Jesus, they would miss out on **salvation**. If you have close friends or family members who have not received the good news about Jesus, you can understand Paul's deep concern.

[Verse 2] Paul made two brief comments to evaluate the spiritual condition of the Jews in his day. First, they had **zeal for God**. Second, their zeal (enthusiasm for their faith) was **not according to knowledge**. When they rejected the message about Jesus, they were misguided or misinformed. Paul may have been reflecting his own experience. Before he met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was a zealous persecutor of Christians (see Acts 8:1-3). As a Christian missionary, preacher, and church planter, he had come to understand that Jesus truly is the Son of God and the Messiah.

[Verse 3] At the heart of the Jews' rejection of Jesus was their misunderstanding of **righteousness**. Paul distinguished two understandings of "righteousness" in this part of his letter. The correct understanding is the **righteousness from God**. This phrase could point to righteousness as a characteristic of God, but here Paul probably intended God as the source of righteousness. We can experience the righteousness God offers us through faith. Paul mentioned that the Gentiles who trusted Jesus had "obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith" (9:30).

Unfortunately, the Jews focused on a second view of righteousness. They tried to **establish their own righteousness** rather than submitting themselves **to God's righteousness**. The Jews mistakenly thought they could be rightly related to God through their works (see vv. 31-32). God's righteousness involves a faith relation to Him (see 1:16-17). Jews and Gentiles would be saved the same way. God had not invented two different plans of salvation. The only way to be saved was through a faith response to God's offer of salvation through the crucified and resurrected Jesus.

Although Paul was primarily an "apostle to the Gentiles" (11:13), his concern for his fellow Jews prompted his clarification of what the Jews misunderstood about God's plan of salvation. Today, many people still think they can somehow earn their way into God's good favor. They don't grasp that salvation is based on Jesus' death for our sins. As Paul wrote, we are "saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift" (Eph. 2:8).

Romans 10:8b-10 Commentary

[Verse 8b] Paul was preaching to Jews and Gentiles the good news about salvation in Jesus. His message was **the message of faith**. Paul quoted the Old Testament several times in verses 4-8a to reinforce the distinction between relating to God through Jewish law and having faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Any non-believers who read this letter or heard Paul's preaching about Jesus would be confronted with a choice. For the Jews in this context especially, the choice was between doing works of the law (see 9:32) or receiving Jesus by faith. Gentile non-believers in the first century had many more religious options, including polytheism, emperor worship, or the mystery religions. No matter their background, Paul presented Christ to them.

[Verse 9] Paul gave his readers a concise overview of the proper response to the gospel message. He mentioned two interrelated aspects of one unified response. First, you should **confess** that **Jesus is Lord**. We often use the word *confess* today to mean our confession and repentance for our sins. Another meaning of confession, however, is a confession or profession of faith. Becoming a Christian is not primarily an act of our minds, but we need to affirm the theological truth that Jesus is "Lord." In the context of the first century, especially with Jews in the audience, to call Jesus "Lord" was to call Him God.

Second, Paul said becoming a Christian means to **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**. This combination of believing and the "heart" might surprise some readers today. The Greek verb rendered "believe" includes an intellectual component, but Paul referred to the aspects of trust and commitment, as well. To the Jews especially, the "heart" was not merely a muscle that pumps blood. The heart was the center of a person's identity and decision-making.

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was central to early Christian preaching. Many Jews believed in the doctrine of a general resurrection of the dead at the end of time. The Pharisees accepted this teaching, but the Sadducees rejected bodily resurrection (see Acts 23:8). Many Jews and Gentiles, however, rejected Christian preaching about the resurrection of Jesus. Paul focused on the crucial nature of belief in Jesus' resurrection in 1 Corinthians: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (15:17).

[Verse 10] In this verse, Paul repeated the two aspects of becoming a Christian, but he reversed the sequence. Here he mentioned **believes** first, followed by **confesses**. This pattern partly reinforces the mutual relation of the inward conviction, believing with the heart, and the outward expression, confessing with the **mouth**.

Romans 10:11-13 Commentary

[Verse 11] Paul here quoted Isaiah 28:16, which he had already quoted more fully in Romans 9:33. Isaiah wrote “the one who believes will be unshakable,” but Paul, perhaps using the Greek translation of Isaiah, said the believer **will not be put to shame**. Paul likely meant a believer totally dedicated to following Christ will not face condemnation at the time of judgment.

[Verse 12] Paul returned to his emphasis that God had only one plan of salvation for all people, not one plan for Jews and another for Greeks (Gentiles). Racial bias was prominent in biblical times, just as it surfaces regularly today. Paul often noted that followers of Christ shared a unity that transcended traditional ethnic distinctions: “There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28; see also Col. 3:11).

Importantly, God **is rich to all who call on Him**. God’s richness is directed to all kinds of people. Paul’s emphasis on God’s graciousness or generosity in His dealings with sinful humanity might startle some people today. Unfortunately, many seem to think God is stingy or tight-fisted with people. They have a legalistic understanding of God, thinking that He only rewards those who obey Him. While it’s true God blesses believers in many ways, God is a God of grace who “wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Although God loves the world (John 3:16) and did not develop distinct salvation plans for Jews and Gentiles, He does expect humans to respond to His offer of salvation. God “is rich to all who call on Him.” What does it mean to “call on Him”? God is not pleased with mere curiosity about who He is; God wants a full commitment to Him.

[Verse 13] Paul then quoted Joel 2:32. Peter had quoted the same verse on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:21). In the context of Joel’s prophecy, **the Lord** referred to God the Father. Paul, however, meant a sinner should call **on the name** of Jesus as “Lord” (see Rom. 10:9). Paul clearly was thinking of Jesus as divine here. To call on the name of Jesus means to make a total commitment to Him as Lord and Savior. Accepting Jesus is not, to use an old phrase, fire insurance. Jesus wants committed disciples, not mere admirers or “fans” in the popular sense.

The biblical concept of faith involves the total person. Faith in Jesus is certainly more than mere intellectual assent to some facts about Jesus, though we need to acknowledge key theological truths. Faith also includes our emotions and will. To believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior means to trust Jesus over the course of a lifetime—to center our lives and our decisions on Him.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 52 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider taking one of the following steps in light of the truth that salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Accept.** If you have not yet believed in Jesus and confessed Him as Lord, do so now. Trust Him for forgiveness from your sin. Turn to Him for a new life. Read the inside front cover of this study for guidance on following Christ.
- ▶ **Examine.** Make time this week to assess your relationship with Jesus. Are you growing closer to Him? Are you studying His Word? Are you sharing the truth of the gospel with others?
- ▶ **Start.** Help launch a new Bible study in your church, neighborhood, or community with the purpose of reaching those who need to hear the truth about Jesus.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 52 of the PSG:

You're going to make around 70 decisions today. Be sure to make one that has the potential to be life-changing, either for you or for someone you know.

PRAY: Conclude by asking God to guide the steps of everyone in your gathering over the next several days. Pray for the faith and courage necessary to obey God's calling, wherever that may lead.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

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