

***Romans 10, Pt. 1***

My brother and I, like children before and after us, loved to play videogames. I still vividly remember what I consider to be one of the most interesting and innovative moments in videogame history. It happened when we were playing *X-Men* for the Sega Genesis. The premise of the game is that a battle simulation computer program has been hijacked by Magneto, our heroes' archnemesis, and keeps transporting the X-Men to virtual yet deadly locations. My brother and I had battled our way through five levels and defeated the boss of level five - a nasty character by the name of Mojo. We were then informed that we had to reset the computer within sixty seconds or the whole thing would self-destruct. This game had no save points. If we did not accomplish the goal before the clock ticked down, then we were done for. We kicked and punched every square inch of the game screen to no avail. Back to square one. So we played through the five levels again. Again we defeated Mojo. Again we were told that we had to reset the computer. And then a crazy thought occurred to me. What if we were supposed to hit the reset button on the Sega Genesis itself? Now remember, we were five levels in, and a misstep would send us back to the start. The clock was ticking. I reached over, pressed the button, and the screen went black. But then, 1s and 0s filled up the screen and the message soon followed: "System reset." The answer to the problem was so simple: we were told exactly what to do. Yet the answer required a breakthrough of sorts, a reorientation that was challenging. **We just needed to hit the reset button.**

As we enter the world of Romans 10, we are reminded that Paul is still working through the problem of Jewish unbelief. Yes, it is true that the mission to the Jews was probably more successful than we sometimes think, but nonetheless, Paul could think of members of his own people who refused to receive the good news that Jesus was Son of David and Son of God. We all can think of people who have yet to believe the gospel. As we observed two weeks ago, Paul answers the implicit question - "Is anyone entitled to God's mercy?" The answer is *no*. Instead, Paul reminds himself of what he has been teaching throughout the letter. Both Jews and Gentiles have fallen short of God's standard of righteousness. Hope can only be found through the sacrificial,

atonement death of Jesus. No one is saved because of their position or pedigree but because they have faith like Abraham. To speak in the language of Jesus - we must be born again. To speak in the language of Ezekiel - our heart of stone must be replaced by a heart of flesh. To speak as Paul does in the eighth chapter - the Spirit of Christ must live inside of you. This is the way of mercy. Paul is grieved by unbelief, yet he knows that any ideas of entitlement will destroy the reality of mercy. And Paul shows us in our chapter today that he is not giving up. **Those who do not believe now may yet believe in the future.** They can still hit the reset button. The answer is before them. They can still believe in the Lord Jesus and make **a public profession of their faith.** We will divide this chapter into two parts. This week we will tackle what Paul says to those who do not yet believe. Next week we will discuss what Paul says to those who believe already. This week we cover profession. Next week we talk about mission.

Before I note how Paul talks about the call to faith and profession in this chapter. I want to make two quick observations. The contemporary church both **overvalues and undervalues professions of faith.** We overvalue a profession when we act like saying anything about Jesus is enough, and nothing else is required of us. This might happen because we prayed a certain prayer twenty years ago. Maybe we completed confirmation class and said we believed the right things. But there must be heart change. There must be real discipleship. Paul says in v. 9 that you must believe *in your heart* that God has raised Jesus from the dead. A one-time verbal commitment is not to be confused with a life lived in union with Jesus. We simultaneously undervalue profession. Paul says that we must believe in our heart, but he also says in v. 9 that we must confess *with our mouth* that Jesus is Lord. That which is in the heart also needs to make its way out through the mouth. We should not settle for weak professions of faith. When asked about faith, instead of saying, "I am a member of First Presbyterian Church" or "I am the pastor of First Presbyterian Church," we should be willing to say things like, "I am a sinner and Jesus is my savior. He died for me. I am joined to Jesus. I have peace with God through Jesus. The Holy Spirit lives inside of me. I believe that Jesus is Lord." Our professions to those around us should be deep and full of truth and experience. Let us encourage one another to talk about Jesus in rich terms.

So, what does Paul say to those who do not yet believe? **He tells them to submit to Jesus, listen to Moses, and trust God's promises.**

**Submit to Jesus.** The problem with those who have not believed is that they are still trying to establish their own righteousness and are not in submission to God's righteousness. This gets us back to the problem of the law that we first noted in chapter two. When someone doesn't have faith, the law is a burden. It is abused, manipulated, and, in the end, it crushes them. To be submitted to God's law means giving up all the law games and trying to face God's full righteous standard. When we know that we can't live up to that standard, then we are led to faith instead of works. To Abraham, faith was credited as righteousness (4:3). The gospel is the power of salvation for all those who believe, for "The just shall live by faith" (1:16-17). Christ indeed is the "end of the law" because he is the perfect embodiment of God's righteous standard and because the law of God pointed to him. And once we know Jesus - once we are submitted to him - then we are empowered to follow the law and even love the law. **Christ is the end of the law not because he destroys the law but because it is his law.** When we are born again, when we have living faith in Jesus, we are not under the law of sin and death but under the law of the Spirit of life (8:2). And under the leadership of the Spirit, the law becomes a source of moral and spiritual guidance. Things can still turn around for those who have not believed. They can still hit the reset button. They can still submit to Jesus.

**Listen to Moses.** As Paul has been dealing with the problem of those who claim obedience to the law and yet do not have faith, he now draws on the teaching of Moses to show that the reset can happen. **Moses was a preacher of living faith.** In Deuteronomy 30, Moses put a choice before the Israelites as they prepared to enter the land. They had the choice to love and obey God and experience his blessing or turn from God and experience curse. The choice before them was clear and God's Word was not a mystery. They didn't have to pull the word out of heaven or cross the sea to attain it. Instead, it was before them. It was "very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it" (Deut. 30:14). The key to spiritual life and vitality under the Mosaic law was faith growing out of a renewed heart which loved God. Moses had the faith like Abraham, and he enjoined the Israelites to have this kind of faith as well. Now Paul was saying that the matter was just as simple and direct for those

who presently do not believe. The way of mercy has clear instructions. Believe in Jesus with both heart and mouth. Be born again and make a profession of faith. Hit the reset button.

**Trust God's promises.** To be clear, Paul offers two promises here, and he is clear that both promises are for Jews and Gentiles, for all who do not yet believe in and follow Jesus. The first promise comes from Isaiah 28:16 by way of the Septuagint, the old Greek translation of the Old Testament. Paul has already quoted this verse at the end of chapter nine. In the Hebrew text, the idea is of panic and hasty movement, presumably because of impending judgment. That idea translated in the Greek text to being ashamed on the day of judgment. And this idea is what Paul brings over here. This is a sure promise of God: the one who believes in Jesus will not be shamed or shaky on that day. And why not? Because of the second promise, coming from Joel 2:32, a passage also quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost: Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. No shame, no shakiness, because they will be saved. **And why will they be saved? Because they have called on the name of the Lord.** This is the great reset button for those who have not yet believed. They can call on the name of the Lord, not just with mouth but with heart. Not just internally but verbalized in a robust profession of faith. Paul is hopeful that all those who do not yet believe will yet be saved.

And how might we make an application of these things today? Three quick thoughts. First, **check the condition of your heart.** Take stock of your love for and reliance upon Christ. If you lack assurance, believe the gospel today. I believe that someone who hears my words needs to repent and believe the truth for the first time. I believe that there is someone else who hears my words who has true faith in Christ but lacks confidence. To that person, today is the day to find rest in the power of the gospel. Second, **make professions of faith** which are rich in experience and truth. Let us encourage one another to speak to neighbors, friends, and co-workers about the profound ways in which Jesus is at work in our lives. And let us do so in rich and deep ways. Let us profess the Lordship of Jesus. Third, **let's go out and tell others about Jesus** so that they too can hit the reset button. But to that subject we will return next week.