

# As Simple as A B C

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*Romans 10:8-13*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. A well-known author who had written many books on prayer was giving a seminar.
  - 1. During the question-and-answer period, a man raised his hand and boldly asked, “Doctor, how should I pray?”
  - 2. The noted expert on the subject answered without hesitation. “It’s very simple. Ask God.”
- B. We live in an age where many people wish to make obedience to God so complex that only a few can really follow.
  - 1. How many denominational groups have a very elaborate style of worship where one really needs to pay attention in order to participate?
  - 2. How many well-meaning people honestly believe that the Bible is so complex that they could never understand it?
  - 3. Even in the early church, many sought to make the truth complex:
    - a. While Paul & Barnabas were preaching in Antioch, “some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’” (Acts 15:1).
    - b. Even in the age of the apostles some claimed that in order to be right before God, you had to have a “secret” wisdom only available to the very elite. It seems to be concerning such a belief that Paul writes: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8).
- C. Yet, the will of God is not really complicated.
  - 1. In fact, it is “***As Simple as A B C.***”
  - 2. Paul writes of the simplicity of the Gospel in this morning’s text: READ TEXT.
    - a. The simplicity of the Gospel does not mean that obedience to God is easy & never difficult.
      - 1) Jesus himself understood the difficulty of obeying him: “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matt 7:13-14).
      - 2) If the way of Jesus were easy, would not many, many more follow his way?
    - b. The simplicity of the Gospel means that one can understand the will of God without much difficulty.
      - 1) How is the Gospel “***As Simple as A B C?***”
      - 2) ANYONE can come, Anyone can BELIEVE, & Anyone can CONFESS.

## ANYONE can come, vv 12-13

- A. “There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Rom 10:12-13).
- B. The church in Rome was apparently composed of both Jew & Gentile believers.
  - 1. As you read through the Book of Romans, two things become quite apparent:
    - a. The Jewish believers thought they were better than the Roman Christians. After all, the Messiah came from Abraham’s seed.
    - b. The Roman Christians believed they were much better than the Jewish Christians – It was they who kept the church in Rome strong when the Jews were expelled from Rome under Claudius.
  - 2. Thus, throughout much of this Book, Paul demonstrates there isn’t a shred of difference between a Jew & a Gentile.
    - a. In opening Romans, Paul says that Gentiles are under sin – the Apostle speaks of a multitude of sins that derive from paganism.
    - b. After condemning the Gentiles, Paul says that circumcision doesn’t amount to a hill of beans if one doesn’t obey every command of God constantly.
    - c. In chapter 3, Paul mixes no words but says that all – Jew & Gentile – are under the condemnation of sin.
      - 1) “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10).
      - 2) “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).
- C. In this morning’s text, Paul continues his theme of the universality of man, but he reverses that theme – No longer does he use man’s common denominator to speak of sin, but all people – Jew & Gentile – alike can come to Jesus.
  - 1. All people have the same Lord.
    - a. The Lordship of Jesus refers to his position of sovereignty over the universe; it is he who is over all.
      - 1) God “raised [Jesus] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age

but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:20-22).

- 2) No one is exempted from the authority of Christ.
- b. Everyone – whether Jew or Greek – must acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus, either in this life or the one to come.
2. God bestows his riches on all who call upon him.
  - a. It is not just a certain ethnic group who can come to Jesus; it isn’t just ones who know enough & have some secret “knowledge” who can come to Jesus.
  - b. The only requirement for receiving the great blessings of God is to call upon him.
    - 1) Peter had a hard time in coming to the realization that Gentiles could come to salvation.
      - a) He had been so entrenched in believing that only the Jews were God’s special people, that God had to send him a vision & then had to pour out the Holy Spirit on Gentiles to convince the apostle that he could, in fact, baptize Cornelius & his household.
      - b) When Peter’s eyes are finally opened, he declares, “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35).
    - 2) God withholds not a single blessing to **anyone** who will call upon him.
- D. We must understand that **everyone** can come to Jesus.
  1. It matters not what color one’s skin is; it makes no difference what one’s level of education is. Anyone can come to Jesus.
  2. It matters not what sins one has committed; he can come to Jesus.
    - a. Paul’s words to the Corinthian church are so encouraging:
      - 1) “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11).
      - 2) The Corinthians themselves had once lived in a host of sins that will keep one from heaven. But, the blood of Jesus washed even them.
    - b. Is it the case this morning that you need to come with your sin & call on the name of the Lord?

## Anyone can BELIEVE, vv 9-10

- A. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”
- B. According to this morning’s text, for one to have salvation, he/she must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead.
  1. It’s not enough simply to believe there is a God; it is not enough to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.
    - a. Don’t misunderstand, we must believe in God’s existence (Heb 11:6) & Jesus’ Sonship (Jn 8:24).
    - b. However, this text goes a step further & declares that my faith must also include the truth of Jesus’ resurrection.
  2. Why is a belief in Jesus’ resurrection so vital to salvation?
    - a. One answer is found at verse 9.
      - 1) Jesus Christ was not raised by his own power; “God raised him from the dead.”
      - 2) Therefore, believing in the resurrection of Christ affirms my faith in the existence of God.
    - b. A second answer is found in Romans 1:4:
      - 1) Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.”
      - 2) Therefore, in affirming the resurrection of Christ, I am affirming that he is the Son of God.
- C. As you know, “faith” has been so misconstrued by the religious world.
  1. For many, if one simply believes that Jesus is the Son of God, he automatically has the forgiveness of his sins.
    - a. That is a historical doctrine that Martin Luther developed with Satan’s help.
    - b. Many groups continue to hold Luther’s damnable heresy. For example, Bruce Ware wrote in an official publication of the Southern Baptist Convention: “God, then, is just to justify sinners as they **believe in Christ alone** for their salvation, forsaking any pretense to works righteousness and turning from their sin as they flee gladly to Christ.”
  2. Yet, I am not willing to give up the biblical teaching of faith simply because some have taught error on the subject.
- D. But, what does it really mean to believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead?
  1. In the New Testament, James uses “faith” in the sense that it’s commonly used in the religious world – simply accepting that Jesus is the Son of God.
    - a. “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (Js 2:19).
    - b. The doctrine of “faith only” does occur in the New Testament in the Book of James, but quite differently than it’s taught by most in the religious world.

- 1) “A person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (Js 2:24). The KJV reads “by faith only.”
- 2) The doctrine of “faith only” is biblical, **if** you understand that “faith only” is insufficient for justification.
2. The Apostle Paul uses the term “faith” in a far deeper sense of “trust.”
  - a. “No distrust made [Abraham] waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was ‘counted to him as righteousness’” (Rom 4:20-22).
  - b. Abraham did not merely believe a God was in heaven, but Abraham was “fully convinced” that God would fulfill his every promise.
3. The author of Hebrews combines both of these aspects of faith when he says, “Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb 11:6).
4. Thus, believing that God raised Jesus from the dead means two things: (a) There is a God who brought Jesus’ body back from death; and (b) That same God will raise my mortal body.
5. What does all this have to do with us?
  - a. If I have faith like Abraham – “fully convinced that God [is] able to do what he [has] promised” – am I not going to do what God requires to receive his promises?
  - b. If I believe my Toyota might malfunction when I need the brakes, am I going to sit around, do nothing, & see what happens? No, I’ll take action.
  - c. Likewise, if I truly believe God, I’ll take action. Do you have a true, biblical faith this morning?

## Anyone can CONFESS, vv 9-10

- A. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”
- B. This past week, I explored several denominational websites to see what they really taught about faith & salvation.
  1. I was truly surprised at what I found: This passage was commonly quoted to support the idea that one only needs to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead in order to have salvation.
  2. I don’t want to be rude, but I really think that some people can’t read. Even if you are naïve enough to declare that this text is the **only** requirement for salvation, it mentions the need to “confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.”
- C. Confession is so important, for one publicly declares his allegiance to Jesus Christ.
  1. “Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 10:32).
  2. “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim 6:12).
  3. I’m convinced that we do a great disservice when we make confession simply declaring one’s faith before baptism.
    - a. I’m not at all denying the need for such a confession, but truly declaring my faith in Jesus can take place in so many situations.
      - 1) Some coworkers are in a religious discussion & one of them looks at me and asks if I really believe Jesus is the **only** way to heaven. I have an opportunity to confess my faith in Jesus.
      - 2) Some friends call & ask if I’d like to go fishing on Sunday morning. When I politely refuse, they ask why. I have an opportunity to confess my faith in Jesus.
    - b. The early Christians were often called upon to confess their faith in Jesus at the peril of losing life & limb.
      - 1) Polycarp was an elder in the church at Smyrna shortly after the time of the apostles.
        - a) He was arrested and threatened with death.
        - b) The proconsul said to him, “Swear, and I will release thee; -- reproach Christ.”
      - 2) The elderly Polycarp looked at the proconsul & declared, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?” Polycarp was then immediately burned at the stake.
  4. We are so often too embarrassed or ashamed to confess our faith in Jesus.
    - a. How can we be too ashamed to confess such faith when Polycarp & countless others willingly died for confessing that conviction?
    - b. More importantly, how can we be too embarrassed to confess Jesus when he bore my shame at Golgotha?

## CONCLUSION

- A. Paul concludes this morning’s text by declaring, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (v 13).
- B. How is it that we call “on the name of the Lord”?
  1. It seems to me that we call on the name of the Lord in the same way that Paul called upon the name of the Lord.
  2. “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).

- a. In the Greek grammar, “calling on his name” includes rising, being baptized, and washing away of sins.
- b. “Calling on the name of the Lord” is action, therefore.
  - 1) It’s obedience to the commands of Jesus.
  - 2) Do you need to call on the name of the Lord this morning? Do you need to do so by arising, be baptized, & washing away your sins?