

Romans 10:9-11

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-10/romans-109-11/>

Here, Paul restates the lesson of the previous verses, Romans 10:6–8, with a saying in the form of a chiasm.

A chiasm is a literary device found throughout scripture, in which a series of statements are made and then repeated in mirror image. It takes the form of:

A

B

C

D

D'

C'

B'

A'

The statements A and A' are mirror images, B and B' are mirror images, C and C' are mirror images, and D and D' are mirror images. A chiasm can have as many elements in the series as desired, but it must have a minimum of two. So, the shortest possible chiasm is:

A

B

B'

A'

An example where this is found in scripture is in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus talks about dogs and pigs. It goes:

A—Dog

B—Pig

B'—Pig

A'—Dog

Here is the quote (note the order of dog, pig, pig, dog):

"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

(Matthew 7:6)

You can see that B' is pig, because pigs trample, and A' is dog, because dogs bite. Once this format is familiar to readers of scripture, we will notice it is found throughout the Bible. Some demonstrate that the entire book of Daniel is written following a chiastic format. When the chiastic form is used, the emphasis is on the center. So in the instance of dog, pig, pig, dog, the emphasis is on "pig." In Jewish culture, both pigs and dogs are unclean, but pigs are the more unclean example.

The chiasm of Rom 10:9–10 is also A, B, B', A':

A Confess

B Believe

B' Believe

A' Confess

Since Paul has just contrasted the righteousness of the law from Leviticus 18 (which does not bring righteousness) with the righteousness of faith from Deuteronomy 30 (which does bring righteousness), it makes perfect sense that faith/belief is the central point. (When scripture speaks of righteousness, it refers to living in harmony with God's good design for humanity, to love and live in harmony with God and one another).

Paul demonstrated from Deuteronomy 30 that "it is not that hard, it is simple" to gain righteousness and all its blessings, the path was simply to "believe what you know in your heart to be true, confess that belief, then do that belief" (Romans 10:6-8).

The sequence is "believe, confess, then do." Paul leaves out "do" in this summary, but it is implied. Once we openly confess something, action naturally follows.

So, what Paul is admonishing us to do here in verses 9-10 is to take this principle from Deuteronomy 30 (believe, confess, do) and apply it. The way we "choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19–20) is to *believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead*, in other words believe the gospel, *confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord*, and live those words. When you do this, then *you will be saved* (v 9).

The chiasm is:

A CONFESS: *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord* (v 9a)

B BELIEVE: *and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved* (v 9b)

B' BELIEVE: *for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness*, (v 10a)

A' CONFESS: *and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation* (v 10b).

That is what the obedience of faith looks like. It does not look like self-justification based on a set of rules. It looks like an obedient heart, reshaped by the indwelling Word of God.

The *salvation* being spoken of here can have two applications. First, when we initially believe, we are justified in the sight of God (John 3:14-15; Romans 3:22-24). Each believer has God's

righteousness imputed to them, because of the death of Jesus we are given the righteousness of Jesus, through faith (Romans 3:22-24, 4:3). Believing on Jesus saves us from the penalty of sin—being separated from God.

We also gain *salvation* from the power of sin in our daily lives when we walk by faith. When we walk by faith, we sow to life, and reap righteousness (harmony with God's good design) (Galatians 6:8). We thus gain the great reward of living in peace with God, and having our design fulfilled, to reign with Him in service and peace.

The central point of the chiasm is faith: *believe in your heart*. This then is the capstone argument that supports the theme of Romans as stated in Chapter 1:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous *man* shall live by faith.’”
(Romans 1:16-17)

The “salvation” being spoken of in Romans 1 and Romans 10 is identical, and in each case refers both to the justification-salvation we receive when we first believe, as well as being saved from the adverse consequences of sin by walking in faith. That is consistent with the phrase “from faith to faith” in Romans 1:17—from the initial faith to believe, to the faith we need to live each day. In each case, we are saved from the adverse impact of sin through faith.

With respect to initial faith, it only takes enough faith to look, hoping to be delivered from the poisonous venom of sin (John 3:14-15). So the primary emphasis in Romans is to encourage these faithful believers in Rome (Romans 1:8) to walk by faith in their daily lives. That is why Paul cites Deuteronomy 30, which admonishes Israel to believe, confess, then do or keep the word of God in their daily actions, in order to receive the blessings that come from living in God's (good) design.

Again, it is important to bear in mind the overall context of Romans, that Paul is answering a slander charge against his gospel of grace, his teaching that righteousness before God comes completely apart from the law or rules (Romans 3:8).

Righteousness comes by faith alone: *For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness* (v 10), Paul now asserts again that living out the righteousness we are given as a gift comes in the same way, by faith. Living out righteousness in our daily lives also does not come by following rules. It comes by faith.

Righteousness (harmony with God's design) in our daily lives comes from believing the word of God in our heart, then confessing that word to be true, then living out that word. The obedience of the heart of faith is the key to living a life of righteousness.

This is like our physical lives. While our physical birth is a gift we receive without action on our part, the consequences we experience in our lives is largely shaped by our choices. Paul admonishes us to choose to believe the word in our hearts, confess it is true, and do it. We might substitute “think” for “confess,” but they are one and the same.

By “confess” Paul clearly does not mean “state without intent to follow.” We become what we dwell upon, and Paul exhorts us here to dwell upon and confess with our mouths the truths we know in our hearts as the pathway to living out our daily lives the gift of righteousness we have in Jesus before God: *And with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation* (v 10).

The result of all this is said to be *salvation*. Any time we see “save” (verb) or *salvation* (noun) we need to ask, “What or who is being saved from what?” Here it seems clear that anyone who is choosing life over death in their daily life (Deuteronomy 30:19) is being saved from the “wages of sin,” which is death (Romans 6:23). This is consistent with Paul’s urging in chapters 6–8 for us to choose life by choosing the obedience of faith, leading to life, rather than to go back into sin and its consequences (or “wages”). If we return to the slavery, death, and earthly condemnation from which we were delivered, then we get the negative consequences of sin—all of which we can avoid by living the resurrection power of Jesus.

Paul ends this passage with a promise in verse 11, again quoting scripture (Isaiah 28:16), saying that walking in faith will not lead to disappointment: *For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed”* (v 11).

This could also be translated that *whoever believes in Him* “will be excited.” There is great blessing and exciting rewards in store for us if we live out the gift of righteousness by walking in faith in our daily lives (1 Corinthians 2:9). Simple faith is all that is required to be justified in the presence of God. But Paul is trying to demonstrate to us that if we can see through the eyes of faith every day, there is enormous benefit to us to live by faith, and he urges his readers to choose that path.

Biblical Text

9 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; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.”