

- Who Will Call on the Name of the Lord? (Rom 8:28, 10:13, 9:16, 3:11, John 6:44, Prov 9:10)

#1. How Then Shall They Call on Him? (Rom 10:14-15, 9:18, Matt 19:6, Isa 52:7)

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Please open your Bibles to the Epistle to the Romans 10:13 (2X). We are continuing in the series called, "**The Wisdom of God**" (2X) in which we have discussed various nuggets of truth that are found in the Word of God. Perhaps you remember, we started this series on August 10, of 2003, with the question of what God's Eternal Purpose is for this creation. I hope you have understood by now that God is in control, and God is in control of everything that happened from the moment He created the first speck of dust in this universe until the events of the Last Day. God is not just aware of every thing, but God causes to come to pass what He has foreordained in His counsel from before the foundation of the world. And this includes everything, from the sin of Adam and Eve to the color of my shoes. If God would not be in control of the color of my shoes, then He would not be the only God, because something would be out of His control. And therefore, listen, here is an important corollary of the sovereignty of God: Therefore nothing in the course of history will be lost to Satan, because everything falls within the plan of God. Nothing will be lost, because everything must work together for good to them who are the called, according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). He will save everyone whom He had planned to save. For this purpose God has designed a wonderful set of building elements which all intertwine into the beautiful structure that we have called "**The Wisdom of God**", because we are still in awe about how everything fits precisely God's plan. We talked about the Providence of God, God's purpose in predestination, the Love of God, Sin and the Penalty for sin, and the penalty for sin that Christ had to endure. We talked about "Ye Must Be Born Again", and about the Church where Born Again believers gather to worship the God who saved them, and we talked about the Devil who tries in vain to obstruct the plans of God. Then we talked about Christ: Christ on the cross, and Christ as the SUN of Righteousness, and Christ in the womb of Mary, and last week we saw that Christ gave His life for His sheep; no one took it from Him, but He laid down His life for His sheep. Therefore the sermon today will center on the question: How do we know if we are one of His sheep? Today we have sermon **# 19** in this series. The title of the sermon today is, "**Saving Faith?**", Saving Faith with a question mark. Why the question mark? It is because there is no saving faith in the Bible. People talk about saving faith all the time, but faith does not save us; Christ saves us. Christ had the faith to persevere to the end on the path of suffering for our sins. That is why there is salvation. But Christ also gave US faith so that we can know if He died for us. God gave us that faith so that we could respond positively when we heard the Gospel. It is not the faith of Christ, for then we could move mountains, but it is a faith like that of Abraham. It is a faith that turns us toward Christ, instead of being His enemies, like we were before. Through this faith we call upon the Name of the Lord. But:

- **Who Will Call on the Name of the Lord?**(Rom 8:28, 10:13, 9:16, 3:11, John 6:44, Prov 9:10)

We read here in Rom 10:13,

Ro 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

O, are these whom God is going to save? Is God going to wait and see who is going to call on His

Name? That would be terrible if this were true. First of all, such an interpretation would make God a liar, because what He says here in Rom 10:13 would then be in direct conflict with Rom 9:16, where God says, "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy". But God is not a liar. We have the responsibility to harmonize every sentence and every word in the Bible, and they harmonize quite well. Secondly, God says in Rom 3:11, "There is NONE that seeketh after God", and therefore NO ONE would call on His Name and no one would be saved. We all would go straight to Hell. But remember the title of this sermon: "Saving Faith?" What is Saving Faith, and did we receive such Saving Faith? Saving Faith received that title, because it is the evidence that salvation has occurred. It is the evidence that God has done a miraculous work in our soul and has given us faith. The Lord Jesus said in John 6:44,

Joh 6:44 No man CAN come to me, EXCEPT the Father which hath sent me draw him.

That is Saving Faith; it is a God given conviction in the heart that draws us to Jesus and it is a God given assurance that this is right. This kind of faith is a gift from God. God does not give this to everyone in the world; you can see this very plainly; not everyone is drawn to put his or her trust in the Jesus of the Bible. O yes, they want a Jesus who is loving all people and will not send anyone to Hell, they want a Jesus who will forgive our sins and save us the moment we say we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, and they want a Jesus who will give us all health and prosperity. But this is not the Jesus of the Bible. Here in the Bible we find a totally different Jesus. He is God. He chooses to save whom He will, because He is God. He chooses to harden whom He will, because He is God. He chose to endure the torments of Hell for those who are His sheep, whom He created for His glory. He chose to pass by others, whom He also created, but He is sending them to Hell to pay for their own sins there. He can do that, because He is God. Which natural man in his right mind will call upon the Name of this God? Nobody will, because this God fills us with fear; the fear of intense pain, the fear of Hell, the fear of not making it on our own. That is why God instills in the souls of His elect people, His chosen people, a healthy fear of God and a healthy fear of Hell, and God says in His Word, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (2X) (Prov 9:10). That wisdom is the wisdom that leads unto salvation, so that we would lose this fear of Hell, and we are drawn to Him as our heavenly Father! God does that only for a remnant of mankind, those whom He decided to save, and the Bible says that God chose them from before the foundation of the world. Is that not fantastic? Those of us who have received this kind of faith stand in awe every day that God chose us. We don't get tired hearing it every Sunday, and in between, and we do not stop rejoicing in it every day of the week. But did you know that there are people who flee from a church where this beautiful truth is preached, and instead they will attend a church where garbage is preached. What does that tell us about their souls? It tells us that their souls are like pigs and like cockroaches: They are unable to distinguish between garbage and beauty: They are unable to discern between truth and error. They are spiritually deaf: They are unable to hear the

voice of the Bridegroom and the voice of the Bride. They are spiritually blind: They are unable to see which preacher preaches the truth of the Bible, and which preacher preaches out of his own imagination. And therefore these pigs, or these cockroaches, do not want to hear about the greatness and about the sovereignty of God. They do not want to believe that God gives us faith; they prefer to believe that they can conjure up such saving faith by themselves, regardless what the Bible says. In fact, they do not want to know the God of the Bible; He is a constant irritation to them. And so

#1. How Then Shall They Call on Him? (Rom 10:14-15, 9:18, Matt 19:6, Isa 52:7)

Ro 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Can you see the impossible situation these unsaved people are in? They do not believe that the Bible is God's spoken Word, and that it is an absolute authority, infallible, and final. It is the final word from God; God will not withdraw what He has said. God said, "The wages of sin is death", and the death that God has in view is to suffer for an eternity in Hell. That is God's final word on the penalty for sin. Is it any wonder that people do not believe that God can be so harsh? They call it harsh, but God calls it "Just". Just and righteous are all His ways. But people do not believe that. And why is this so? It is because God has not given them eyes to see, and ears to hear. They have never heard the true Gospel explained to them. Ah, the TRUE GOSPEL. Allow me to summarize it in eight points: They heard that Christ came to save good people, but they have not heard that Christ came into the world to save sinners. They heard that they should be sorry for their sins, but they have not heard that without repentance there is no salvation. They heard that God loves everyone in the world, but they have never heard that God loves His elect children and God hates all workers of iniquity. They heard that Jesus came to die for everyone in the whole world, but they have not heard that Christ came specifically to save only His people from their sins and from the consequences of their sins. They have heard that the blood of Christ washes away sins and all we have to do is to ask for forgiveness, but they have never heard that there was only one day in history that sins were forgiven, and that was when the Lord Jesus suffered and died on the cross, when we did not exist yet. They heard that we have to accept the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Savior, but they have not heard that He must choose us and accept us as His Bride and that we freely receive that gift of grace, like as a woman who receives the honor bestowed on her to become a man's wife. They have heard that we can accept or reject Christ as our Savior because we do that out of our own free will, but they have not heard that God bestows His gift of grace irresistibly, and makes us "Born from above", because God says, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom 9:18). They have heard that we can fall out of grace if we sin grievously, but they have never heard that what God has done in our soul He has done for all eternity, and He will see to it that we will not sin and remain unrepentant to the degree that He would have to take His Holy Spirit away from us. He chose us, He paid for our sins, He converted

our souls in this life, and He preserves us for all eternity. God applies to Himself the laws He has set up in the Bible. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt 19:6) applies to a man and his wife, but it also applies to Christ and His Bride, the church. God will not permit that any one would be able to separate Christ from His Bride. This is "How they shall call on him in whom they have not believed". God will change their hearts so that they will believe. And this is "How they shall believe in him of whom they have not heard". They have not heard the TRUE GOSPEL before, but when God brings to them the truth of the Word of God, God will draw out of those who have heard those whom He planned to save. "But how shall they hear without a preacher?" Now here is a real problem. There are many people who claim to have read the Bible from cover to cover, even more than once. But when you probe them for their understanding, you find that there is none. For example, the Scribes and Pharisees in Jesus days knew the OT inside out. The Scribes made it their business to copy the Bible letter by letter. But did they understand? Absolutely not! We see here an application of the principle, "But how shall they hear without a preacher?" God ordained here that a person's spiritual hearing must go together with the preaching of a preacher, or the teaching of a teacher of the Word of God. That is why God sent the Apostle Paul on a whirlwind tour through the Middle East to preach the Gospel, so that the many whom God has chosen may hear and believe. But from where can we draw a qualified preacher who will preach faithfully from the Bible? God gave the answer in:

Ro 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

We cannot hear without a preacher, so God sends a preacher who preaches the truth. God sends a preacher who will not compromise; he is a faithful undershepherd under the Chief Shepherd. He enters in by the Door. And the Door represents Christ, who said, "I Am the Door". Christ crucified is the Door. There is no other door leading unto salvation. But who is the faithful undershepherd "except they be sent". Sent by whom? Sent by Christ! All others who do not enter in by the Door are hirelings. The hireling fleeth when he sees the wolf coming. The hireling will not fight when worldly principles invade the church, or when Charismatic gospels creep into the church, or when false teachings from a well-known Bible teacher are brought in through the airwaves. No! The hireling has a "wait and see" attitude. But not so with those whom the Chief Shepherd has appointed. They will fight for their sheep to the bitter end. That is why God quotes this verse from Isa 52:7. Hold one finger here in Rom 10:15 and please turn to the Prophecy of Isa 52:7 (2X). In Isa 52 God declares that His chosen people, His elect, the sheep of His own pasture, will see the power of God when He leads them to salvation. God says in Isa 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

The first half of Isa 52:7 is practically the same as the last half in Rom 10:17. It applies to the feet of them that bring the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, them that publish salvation to the captives of sin and Satan. But then God adds in Isa 52:7, "That saith unto Zion". Who is Zion? Well, it is obvious from the context of Rom 10:15 that God is addressing those who are His elect children, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles, all those whom God intends to save. Zion is the place where God resides, and in the NT the place where God resides is in the souls of those who are His elect children. Is this not exciting! God calls US Zion, the city of the living God. And look at the next three words: "Thy God reigneth". Could anything be more explicit in saying: "Thy God is sovereign; He will do all the works that He has foreordained in His Counsel from before the foundation of the world". And can we see through all this God's irresistible grace at work? Put a sticker here in Isa 52; we will come back there soon, and let us continue in Rom 10:16 (2X).

- **Lord, Who Hath Believed Our Report?** (Rom 10:16, Isa 53:1-2, Deut 5:15)

Ro 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (Yes, who hath believed our report?)

Here we read that the True Gospel was not popular and still is not popular. Most of the Jews have rejected the Gospel and most of the Gentiles have rejected the Gospel. Most of them remain in unbelief. But look now at the words in Rom 10:16; Did you notice that the verb in Rom 10:16 is not "believed" but it is "obeyed". There is a reason why God did this. The Gospel must be heard, the Gospel must be believed, but also the Gospel must be obeyed. Our obedience to the Gospel reflects what we believe, and what we believe reflects what we have heard. If we do not obey the Gospel it means that we also have not believed it. And even though we do bring a faithful report, Isaiah said, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" Very few have believed our report of the Lord Jesus Christ, who He is and what He has done. You can experience it even today. Most people will tell you, "O that is interesting; tell me more about it". But as soon as they have left, they have forgotten what you said. Please turn again to Isaiah 52, and let us now turn to Isa 53:1 (2X) to pick up the quotation.

Isa 53:1 ¶ Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

Isa 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire Him.

Yes, "to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?" When we think of the Arm of the Lord, we think of Deut 5:15, where God declared, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out Arm". We know that this is a picture of salvation. But who of the children of Israel understood that the Exodus was a picture of how God saves souls? Very few of them. To them God revealed the Gospel. To them was the Arm of the Lord revealed. This answers the question of verse 1. Who hath believed our report? Only those to whom God desired to reveal the Gospel of salvation, only to them was revealed that

salvation was only through the Atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. All ceremonies in the OT were pointing to this ultimate high point in the history of the world. And then verse 2 continues to outline that Jesus appeared like any other man: "For He (Christ) shall grow up before Him (God) as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He (Christ) hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him (Christ), there is no beauty that we should desire Him (Christ)." He grew up like a root out of dry ground. Spiritually the nation of Israel was dry, very dry. As if nothing could grow or bear fruit in that dry, desert land. And so, who would believe that Christ was special? Almost no one believed that. Eleven of the twelve Apostles believed that He was special. His mother Mary believed that He was special. But even His half brothers did not believe in Him. That is how dry the land of Israel was in those days. Let us now return to Rom 10:16. Who hath believed our report? God answers that the Gospel, which is preached, is the ordinary means of generating faith:

#2. Faith Cometh By Hearing (Rom 10:17, Rom 4:16, Josh 24:2, 1Cor 2:14, Jam 2:19-20)

We read in Rom 10:17,

Ro 10:17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Actually the Greek text is a little clearer. The two Greek words translated "by" in the English text are actually two different words. The first "by" is actually "out of", and the second "by" is actually "through", so that the literal translation reads: "Therefore faith comes out of hearing, but the hearing comes through a word of God" (2X). Therefore the first half of this verse speaks about how faith comes into being. We are talking about Saving Faith. That is the faith, which is the evidence that salvation has occurred. People claim all kinds of faith, but the faith that accompanies salvation is the faith like that of Abraham. We read that in Rom 4:16. You know that Abraham had great faith. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his only begotten son, because God asked him to do so. This faith did not come out of Abraham himself, but it was a gift from God. It could not possibly have come out of Abraham himself, because we read in Josh 24:2 that Abraham formerly was a worshipper of idols. How did Abraham's faith come out of hearing? He heard God speaking, he believed what God said, and he acted on it. Three times do we find in the NT the words, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness". Was Abraham considered saved because he displayed such great faith? No! Abraham received this great faith from God as a gift, so that he could take hold of the promises of God and believe that they were his. Abraham received this great faith from God, so that by his actions he could show that he was a child of God. Please turn to the Epistle of James 2:19 (2X). What exactly is Saving Faith? First what it is not: Saving Faith is not a work on the part of man that makes us worthy of salvation. All the work that makes us worthy of salvation has been performed and completely finished by Christ on the cross. Also we may not say that Saving Faith is a condition that we must meet, so that God is willing to give us the salvation that Christ purchased based on meeting that condition. There are no conditions. Salvation is 100% free and sovereign. Also we may not say that salvation has been extended to us by

God's gracious hand, and all we have to do is accept it from His hand by faith. The natural man does not want anything to do with God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him" (1Cor 2:14).

Jas 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Jas 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

God spoke here through the pen of James, the half brother of Jesus. He speaks here about Faith and about the characteristics of Saving Faith. If you believe that there is one God, that is no credit to you whatsoever. The devils also believe that there is one God, but they tremble by the thought of Him. And then he adds something that has been forgotten by most people: "Faith without works is dead". It means that what is called Saving Faith by most people, is actually a dead corpse; It had not died recently, it has never been alive. It was dead when we were born and it remained dead until now. "Faith without works is dead!" Let us look at ourselves now. If we have to search our memory for any good works we have done, search no more, because your faith is dead. If our works of love for Christ do not accompany us every day, then we do not love Christ, and we are deceiving ourselves that we are saved. Then we might as well start over again, or forget it. Now look at the 2nd half of Rom

- **And Hearing By the Word of God** (Rom 10:17)

Ro 10:17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Literally, the 2nd half says, "But the hearing comes through a word of God". The ability to hear spiritual things, or the ability to hear the Gospel preached, comes through a message that has been uttered by God. God spoke and the world came into being. In our lifetime God spoke and our soul became "Born Again". This is what enables people to hear spiritual things. In other words, there is no salvation without God's electing power. God shows us here that wherever faith is God has there already given an evidence of His election. And God obligated Himself to save people this way. But Rom 10:17 does not only apply to the step of justification, it also applies to sanctification. If we desire to have more faith, or if we want to become spiritually more mature, read the Bible, read the Bible. God uses the Bible as an instrument in His hands to bring salvation to those whom He chose to save, and to make these people grow in the faith by more reading the Bible. Is this not very logical? Some things in the Bible are mysterious, but this is not one of them. If God has indeed promoted us to become the Bride of Christ, is it not logical that this Bride would communicate as much as possible with her Bridegroom? Of course that is true in our daily life, as well as in our heavenly life. The direction of our communication upward is through our prayers. The communication from God downward is through the reading of His Word. And so the bond between God and us is strengthened. We must remember that Faith is a bond, a spiritual bond, whereby we are so united with Christ that by it we live, out of Him. Literally all our salvation is in Christ. In Him is our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, the adoption unto children of God, our eternal and perfect righteousness, our knowledge of God and His wisdom, freedom from

the enslavement to sin, our sanctification, our eternal life, and light and joy. And therefore we must be so united with Him that we become one plant with Him. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches". That opens up a question: Do we really desire to be so close to Him? Now that is a searching question. Can we invite Jesus into our house at any time in the day, or would we be embarrassed to let Him in? For example, are we watching 2 hours of TV, but we do not have time for Bible study? Are the children pestering each other, and do we know what to do about it, but we have neglected those duties? In other words, we have no time for God. If that is a reflection of our soul, should we then not be ashamed? I have seen the attendance to our Sunday morning Bible Study dwindle. I have seen the attendance to our Sunday afternoon Bible Study dwindle even more. And I have seen that the attendance to our Tuesday Bible Study has so much dwindled that we all fit around a dining table. Now I am sure that you all have a legitimate excuse and that you have more God-glorifying things to do in those hours. I am just observing things.

#3. Have They Not Heard? (Rom 10:18-19, 3:2, Deut 32:21)

Ro 10:18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Ro 10:19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people, *and* by a foolish nation I will anger you.

Who is God speaking about? Who are "they" in verse 18? Have they not heard? Has Israel not heard? And that is true. The nation of Israel has not heard the Gospel, even though it was preached right under their nose, and even though they were the keepers of the oracles of God (Rom 3:2). They heard with their physical ears. The sound of the Gospel went through all the earth, and the words of the Gospel of salvation went unto the ends of the world. Just think of it. The Roman Empire stretched from Egypt all the way to the British Isles. For a Roman soldier to be stationed on this remote island of Britain was really equivalent to being banished to the utmost corners of the world. And yet, it was not long after Pentecost that the Gospel was heard even on these remote islands that we call Great Britain. And within a couple hundred years even the German barbarians had heard of the Gospel of Christ crucified. So, why did Israel not hear? You see, in these 4 closing verses of this chapter God is drawing situations that are parallel to situations we have today. The Bible was written to be applied in all times. In the 1st Century AD there were two groups of people: Israel and the Gentiles. The Gospel was first preached in Israel, but the Gentiles scooped it up and the harvest among the Gentiles was far greater than that in Israel. But God wrote the Bible for all times. So, how do we apply this to our days? The equivalent to the nation of Israel are the people in the church. They have been born there, they were raised in the church, and they had all the benefits of being the keepers of the oracles of God. But familiarity breeds contempt. And very soon most of those church people are so wrapped up in their own routine, that they have no more time for God. In other words, they are so busy for God, they have left

their first love without even knowing what they did. And thus the wonders of the Word of God were scooped up by foreigners and strangers, who did not mind to go out of their way and change their own schedules to whatever was required. That is the picture that God painted here in Rom 10:18-21. God gave a quotation here from Deut 32:21,

De 32:21 They have moved me to jealousy with *that which* is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which* are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

"That foolish nation" refers to the Gentile nations who were considered foolish in the eyes of Israel.

- **Does This Relate to Our Church?** (Rom 10:20-21, Isa 65:1-2)

Now it gets very serious. We read here in Rom 10:20-21,

Ro 10:20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

Ro 10:21 But to Israel (remember the church) he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

God lets us know that there are two groups of people in the church. Listen carefully: In the first group there are the strangers, those who formerly were utterly insignificant in matters pertaining to the church, who were strangers of the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. In the second group there are the church people, those who can point to a long line of generations in the church, but who have left their first love. In Rom 10:20 God is addressing the first group, and God has many good things to say about them. Then in Rom 10:21 God is addressing the second group, in not very complementary terms. Think of God's patience to put up with a disobedient and gainsaying people. Likewise God has addressed these two groups of people in Isa 65:1-2. Just listen to what God has to say about the first group of people, the newcomers:

Isa 65:1 ¶ I am sought of *them that* asked not *for me*; I am found of *them that* sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that* was not called by my name.

And then God addressed the second group of people, the descendants of respectable church people:

Isa 65:2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that* was not good, after their own thoughts;

Taken all into account we come to the conclusion that God chose to save whom He will, and not what the will of our parents or our grandparents was. He lifted us up from the dunghill, to set us among princes and to make us inherit the throne of glory. That is what God did for me. Can you say that too?

Let me read to you a little poem:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew: He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true; No, I was found, was found of Thee.

These words have been put to music by Jean Sibelius and are found in Hymn # 387 that we are going to sing in a few minutes. AMEN. Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.