



Sermon – February 23, 2020
Dr. Malcolm Yarnell

Verses Covered This Week

Romans 10:5 - 17

Isaiah 40:6 – 8

Isaiah 55:8 – 11

John 1:1 – 4, 14

Hebrews 4:12 – 13

Leviticus 18:5

Deuteronomy 30:11 – 14

Isaiah 52:7

Well, thank you for being here in God's house today. And my prayer for you is that you will hear the Lord speak to you. I pray that you will hear the Lord speak to you perhaps for the first time that God offers you the free gift of salvation. And if you're a believer, no matter how long, I pray that you will grow in that salvation today by hearing the word of the Lord.

We're going to be reading out of Romans chapter 10. And so I hope you'll go there. There's some text that I'd like to cover with you first, but you just need to hear them rather than reading them. By the way, I saw your former pastor, Chris Osborne, it's hard to miss him because he's always there. And for some reason, Steve, he likes to come up to me and grab me by the coat lapels. So I was in the office suite, he's actually in my office suite as well. And I was in the office suite the other day and he came up and grabbed me by the lapels and he said, "Are you a TCU fan?" And I said, "No." He said, "What's that tie?" I had a nice purple tie on and I said, "It's just a purple tie." He said, "If you're going to preach in College Station then you cannot wear that tie." And I said, "Well I've got a nice orange one." And he just shook his head, "No, no. Just don't wear a tie, Malcolm. And moreover, whatever you do, don't let them know that you are a graduate of LSU. Do not let them know that." And so, oh, I'm sorry. I just lost all credibility with you, didn't I? Listen, I raise that, that is funny, but credibility. Where is our credibility? Where is our authority? Where is saving authority? What ought we to hear? I hope that you don't hear Malcolm Yarnell today. I hope that you hear God speak through this unworthy instrument. And if you will listen to God's word, He will speak to you and transform your life and if there is darkness there, He will shed light. If there is a lack of hope, oh, He will fill you with hope. If you're suffering through malady, He will give you joy. Just hear the word of God and hear what He has to say to you.

There should be no doubt whatsoever that the word of God is an extension of God's own dynamic being. We see this in so many ways in Scripture. In Genesis chapter 1, you remember God the Father forms the chaos into created existence by His Spirit and through His word. The refrain in the chorus that was driving this symphony of God's creative activity is repeated constantly. And God said, and then there was. Remember? God said, "Let there be light." And there was light and so on. But not only is this word of God the agent of creation, He is also the basis of all stability. For only God in His word and His Spirit are eternal by nature. The word of God participates in the foreverness of God. In Isaiah 40, it is God as the word who stands perfect forever. While everything else dries up and blows away like the Texas grass in a hot, August drought. In Isaiah 55, it is God is the word who descends from heaven in order to reveal Himself to humanity. His divine transcendence which blocks us from seeing Him is overcome by His divine grace through the word. Listen to Isaiah 40.

⁶A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows on it. Surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

And in Isaiah 55, listen as God describes how high above His is and how we can't even understand Him because of that.

⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, He says, neither are your ways my ways." Declares the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Do you realize that we can't even conceive of God correctly because He is so far above us? But he continues.

¹⁰For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater. ¹¹So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

In other words, God overcomes our limitations, our inability to think as He things, to understand His ways. He overcomes it by grace through His word. He speaks a word to us and it encounters us and accomplishes in us what God intends for it to accomplish. When we turn to the New Testament, the grand portrait of the divine apotheosis of the word of God takes on ever more glorious detail. When I was in Oxford, one of the things that I noticed whenever we walked into the Sheldonian Theatre for our graduation, which it was almost like a medieval Latin consecration of the priesthood. Up above there was a vision of heaven that had been painted. And it was glorious. Listen, Scripture gives you even more than that. In John chapter 1 it is the word of God who is specifically identified, both as God and as with God. Moreover, this word of God who is eternal and powerful took upon Himself our human flesh. And in Hebrews 4, we learn that the word of God, Scripture, has the power to look into our very souls. To take and open up our hearts for an inspection that makes us cringe and crumble before the dynamic law of

God. And were it not for the Gospel alongside the law, we would have only reason to despair. Listen to John chapter 1.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He, that is the Word, was in the beginning with God. ³And all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. ⁴In Him, that is in the Word, was life and the life was the light of men.

And then in verse 14, John says,

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth.

And, of course, John is speaking of Jesus Christ who is God that has become human being to walk in our midst. But the word of God is more than just the Son of God, although he is everything. It is also Scripture itself. Hebrews chapter 4 says this,

¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow. And discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. ¹³And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

When I read that text, what I discover is an expression of what many of us feel. You and I know, if you've been a believer for any time, you know that you should be in the word of God. But if you're struggling with sin, what is the last thing that you want to do? Read the Bible. Why? Because you know it is going to convict you. But that is a good thing. Because the thing that is hurting you is sin. And the word of God looks into your soul and like a surgical instrument, that two edged sharp knife, it will take and get down right into who you are. Because the word of God looks into us and lets us know who we are better than we could ever know before. And that frightens us because that is the law of God. But also there is the Gospel. We could continue in both the old and the New Testaments with a _____ of praise to the word of God. The word of God is God Himself in His sovereign acts. You see, God created us by His word. He converts us by His word. He completes us by His word. The word of God in His three-fold nature is God Himself coming to us. The word is God who comes to us in the flesh. The word is God who comes to us through human speech. The word is God who comes to us in the human literature of the Bible. May I share with you my own journey with the word of God? When I was a little boy about the age of six/seven, I fell in love with poetry. And as an introvert who could find some solace for the pain of life only within my own mind, I was drawn to poetry, and to fiction. And these were the escapes from the horrors that were all too real to me in real life. Poetry consumed my heart and fiction gave me a narrative. They offered worlds of supposed safety to which I might escape. But you know, God laid it on my heart by His Spirit to put both things aside and read His word instead. So I read the word constantly. My parents would send us to bed and tell us not to move. And I remember finding a flashlight and getting under the covers and reading. And I would read the Bible under the covers hoping to escape punishment and there Jesus Christ, the living word of God, came to me in and through the text. Those red letters still jump out and let me know that Jesus is so real. And through the years, I've come to see that the Biblical narrative is so much more powerful than any human history or story. For

Biblical history which concerns the past, the present, and the future makes sense of every human history. The Bible takes our facts and our fictions and sorts through them to show us what is true. And for my little confused mind, I learned that the Biblical poetry is so complex and so beautiful and so meaningful that I still am growing to this day into a discovery of its aesthetic depths. And for my little broken heart, I found that the songs became my language by which I could express my heart. The songs as the prayers of David and supremely of his son became my prayers. And I found a voice for my soul. I learned how to pray and am still learning how to pray through the songs. To get peace in the chaos and joy in the heartache.

But today, let's quickly read Romans 10 and discover the saving power of the word of God. As we consider this passage, I want you to keep in mind how beautifully simple and yet complex this God who is also the Word of God is. The word of God comes to us in His divine glory, but a glory clothed in the most simple and yet most sublime of human literature. He gave us, as human beings, the gift of language in Genesis chapter 2. And then He uses our language to speak to us in ways that transcend even the abilities of human language. He whispers in our ears words like we whisper to our children in order to convey a vision of who He is. A vision that is utterly life-changing for it changes our reality. In Romans 10 there are at least 10 word pairs. And listen to these word pairs because it sets up a dialectic, a poetry, in our minds and our hearts. There is the law that condemns and the gospel that saves. There is the Christ who descends and the Christ who ascends. There is the human mouth and the human heart. There is Jesus as man and Jesus as Lord God. There is Jesus who died and Jesus who arose from death. There is the Jew and the Greek. There is hearing and believing. There is sending and preaching. There is the divine call in the human answer. There is obedience and disobedience. And there is even more. But governing the center between all of this between all of this movement, providing their unity and therefore their meaning as Christ, the Word, the Lord, who is come in our flesh, who is died for our sins, who is arisen so that we might be saved, and who is ascended to reign at the right hand of the Father. He truly is King.

Around 410 A.D. a north African theologian Augustine said this, he said, "The New Testament lies concealed in the old and the old lies revealed in the new. So you need both the old and the New Testaments together." And when you read Romans chapter 10, what you discover is that there are Old Testament passages scattered throughout that text. As a matter of fact, it is a collection and then a commentary on the Old Testament. At least 10 references, quotations, and moreover, many allusions from all parts of the Old Testament. He first quotes Leviticus 18:5 which summarizes the purpose of the law. Do you know what God's law was for? It is actually to let us know what the Lord's will is. Leviticus 18:5 says,

⁵So you shall keep my statutes and my judgments by which a man may live if he does them.

Now Paul says that the righteousness that is based on the law can be yours, but only if you obey it fully. That's the key. You can get to heaven through your good works if you actually have done only good works. The problem is all of us have failed. For all have sinned, Paul wrote, and come short of the glory of God. But Paul doesn't stop there. He goes on. In Deuteronomy 9 he relays a warning by God to Israel to remind them that they are not being given the promised land because of own unrighteousness. We don't get the promised land. We don't get salvation because of our own righteousness. He says, "Do not say in your heart it is because of my

righteousness. Rather it is in order that He may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers.” But Paul doesn’t stop there. He also sites Deuteronomy 30. Let me read Deuteronomy 30 to you.

¹¹For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you; neither is it far off. ¹²It is not in heaven that you should say, “Who will ascend to heaven and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it.” ¹³Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, “Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?” ¹⁴But the word is very near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.

Did you catch that language? The word of God actually enters your being. It’s a powerful word this word of God. Did you notice what Paul did there? He’s sets up a dialectic, a moving back and forth between the two great truths declared in the word of God: the law and the gospel. However, he transitioned from the righteousness based on the law which can only condemn us because we’ve all sinned. He knew the way of condemnation by law fails to bring us salvation. Rather he points us toward the righteousness based on faith. The only way that we can be right with God, the only way we can survive before the throne of judgment is to trust in what God does for us. Look at Romans 10 in verse 5.

⁵For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷“or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

In other words, any salvation that we have is entirely the gift of God alone. If you want to be saved, stop saying to yourself, “I can go up to God.” No, you cannot. You cannot bring Christ down from heaven or bring His up from death. Only God can do that. Salvation is by grace alone through faith along in Jesus Christ alone. Grace is God coming down to save us and grace is the word of God working within us to raise us up to Him. Romans 10 verse 8, the next verse, says this,

⁸But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim”;

Paul is reminding us from Deuteronomy 30 that the word of God works in such a way that it comes through the ears and drawing further upon physical imagery, it comes in your mouth and in your heart. It rests there waiting. It’s near you. The word of God is so powerful that it penetrates your soul and your body. The word of God comes from without, but the word of God works its way within you. It has an internal affect upon your mouth and your heart. Please understand that that is why you are here to hear the word of God. Because you or the ones who brought you understand that if you hear the word of God, it has an impact on you that is absolutely beyond your abilities. God’s word is powerful. And that is why we also take the word of God and we go out to others to speak the word of God to them. The word of God brings salvation to a person’s doorstep and then it goes into your deepest dwelling place. And the greatest gift that you can ever receive is the word of God. And the greatest gift you can ever receive is the word of God. Look at verses 9 and 10. Here it comes to the heart of the way of salvation.

⁹because, 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. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

So what this is saying is if a person is to be saved, the word of God must be believed in the heart. And the word of God must be confessed by the lips. Salvation must be embraced by the whole woman or the whole man or the whole child. Moreover, note the content of the saving word. You must confess that Jesus is Lord. That's the basic Christian confession. That is what makes a Christian. Being a Baptist is a good thing, I think it's a biblical thing. But that's not what makes you a Christian. Jesus is Lord. Believing that in your heart, confessing it with your lips, that is what makes you a believer. Now I think that ought to be confessed in baptism. Because baptism actually is a way of expressing the next part of it. That you believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead. That's the gospel. If you believe that Jesus died on the cross and arose from the dead, if you confess that He is Lord, that's what makes you a Christian. It is so simple. And yet the truths are so grand. For to say Jesus is Lord, is to say that He is God Himself. It is also to say that He is the King of my life. And to say that you believe that God has raised Him from the dead is to say that Jesus Himself has conquered death and it has no hold anymore and He is our hope. This is the way of salvation. And it's a way of salvation that's open to everybody. Now the gospel is for all people. That's why Paul went on to cite Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32. He was telling the Jews who had presumed that they were the elect ones and that the Gentiles were not. Paul told them from the Old Testament, "No, no, no. The gospel is for everyone." Listen to verses 11 through 13.

¹¹For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believe in Him will not be put to shame." ¹²For 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. ¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The primary question that Paul dealt with in Romans 9 is whether God has a place for Israel. And following the historical progression of the Old Testament witness, Paul demonstrated conclusively that election, I know that is a big word that gets argued about so much, but in Romans 9 election is centered in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. Most of us think of election as this human being elected and this person not. No, that's not what he's getting at. Paul thinks of our election to salvation as enclosed entirely in Jesus Christ. And if you want to be among the elect, then call on Jesus for salvation and you will be the elect. The Israelites are elects, but they are elected to be the people in whom Christ would come. Christ is the elect One.

So what does it take for a person to be saved? Believe in your heart and call upon the Lord. That's what it takes. Hold on. You mean I don't have to work through the whole doctrine of particular election or corporate election or whatever you want to call it? You mean I don't have to decide if I'm elected from eternity first like the Calvinist believes? Or whether God foreknew I would have faith first like the Armenian believes? No. The point is that if you want to call on the Lord, then call on Him. That's how you know you're elect. Call on the Lord. But notice this. However you construe salvation with your human theological system, it is all still by divine grace. God calls you first through sending His word and then you answer with your word. The word of God is the agent of our salvation. The German captures it perfectly for the word, for

word in German is *wort*. And the word for answer is *antwort*. It's a responding word. If you hear the word of God and you call back to Him, "Save me, Lord." You're saved. That is God at work through His word. The next discussion in the next few verses which follows upon the what to do question. So the question is, "What should I do?" "Call upon the Lord and I can be saved." Concerns the how do you do it question. What do you do to be saved? You call upon Him. But now how do you do it? What is the way of salvation? Well Paul responds, "This is the way." By asking a series of leading questions. He basically argues that speaking the gospel to others is the way of salvation for others. It's like the wise old alien who helped the lost young Mandalorian navigate his way through certain death. In the same way, Paul wants you to be able to say to others, "This is the way." By way of saying, "I have spoken." I guess you had to see the TV show to catch that. How then, Paul writes, will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How can somebody call for salvation if they haven't believed? Then he asked another question. And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And then he asked another question. And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news, but they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord who's believed what he has heard from us?" The answers to each question are found in the subsequent question. The way of salvation is through the mode of speaking the word of God. That's how people are going to be saved. Speak the word of God to them. That's why our society and all fallen societies don't want Christians to speak. But we must. For this is the way of salvation. And did you notice the order of salvation here? There, it's a seven-fold order. One, the Christian is sent with the word of God in her heart or his heart. You're sent. The Lord sends you. The church sends you. Number two: the Christian proclaims the word of God to the lost person. Number three, the lost person hears the word of God. Number four, the lost person believes in the word of God (that's the movement in the heart). Number five, the lost person calls to the Lord for salvation (that's the confession from the mouth). And then the lost person is saved. Finally, that new Christian is then sent with the word of God to others. That's how the word of God works. What is the order of salvation? It all depends on us, all of us, for preaching the gospel to the world is a command that is not just given to pastors and missionaries and evangelists. It is given to every single one of us.

My dear musicians, when you stand here and sing, and I can see it in many of your faces, you understand you are giving the word of God to people. You're calling them to holiness and health and hope. And when parents, when you are at home with your children, before you lay them down to sleep, give them the word of God. Let them know that Jesus loves them and then no matter how a failure you are; Jesus still loves them. And that will give them life. And when you run into the grocery store at a friend, have Scripture from your heart ready to go forth to people and they will be blessed. This is the way of salvation. And in a powerful move, Paul cites two texts from the great servant song of Isaiah 52 and 53. This song, by the way, is the most complete prophecy about the future incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it's a masterpiece of theological poetry that was written almost 800 years before Jesus actually died on the cross and rose from the dead. And he cites the preamble to the song. In Isaiah 52:7 he says,

⁷How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation and says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

Now I don't know about you, but feet don't strike me as particularly beautiful. I mean, take off your shoe and show your foot to your neighbor. OK. None of you are doing it. Good. Because the foot is just not an attractive part of the body. But if you are sharing the gospel of Jesus with somebody, they're getting saved, they're going to think the ugliest part of you, your foot, is the most beautiful part of a person they've ever seen in their life. That's what he means by this text. But second, Paul cites from Isaiah 53:1 which is the second stanza of the suffering servant song. Who, he says, has believe our message? Who has believed our message? And that is the question that we need to end with. That's a question that must be asked by everyone. Who has believed the word of the Lord? Have you? I hope you have. For Jesus is, as the apostle John says, the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Him.

Listen, it doesn't mean anything good to you if you hear the message and you don't believe. The question hangs in the air expecting an answer. Who has believed? Who among you has believed? Of course, this raises the question, how does a person come to believe? We know that in order to be saved, a person must believe in their heart that Jesus is the Lord, that He died on the cross, and that He arose from the dead. But how does this work in the human heart. The closest that we ever get in Scripture to answering that question is found in the next verse. Look at the final verse, verse 17.

¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Faith comes from, and the Greek word is *ex*, from hearing. And hearing comes, and the Greek word is *dia*, through the word of Christ. So the instrumental source of faith is hearing. And the affective source of hearing is the word of Christ. And so if I had written that, I would have thought, "So faith comes from hearing and hearing the word of Christ." But he actually says, "No, hearing through the word of Christ." What he means is that your ability even to hear and to understand the Gospel is due to the word of God itself and not yourself. God's word is powerful. It is powerful to create all things. It is powerful to convict us of our sins. It is powerful to give us hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the saving power of God. How's a person saved? A person is saved only by the word of Christ Himself. Christ comes to the person who hears through the proclamation of the word. Indeed, the word establishes and empowers a person's ability to believe the good news. You are saved externally by grace through the work of Christ on the cross. He is the living word. And you are saved internally by grace through the work of Christ through the proclamation of the cross which is also the living word.

Would you bow your heads with me?

The saving message of Christ. Oh, think on that for a moment. It comes to you as a gift. It enters through your ears and that word of God that has come through your ears is now, even now, resting upon your tongue ready to be confessed so that you might be saved. And that word of God is weighing upon your heart saying, "Believe in Jesus. He is your hope. He is your only way. He is the truth that you have been looking for." Simply repeat that word through faith in your heart and call it back to the Lord boldly with your tongue. My fellow human being, God is calling you to be saved. Will you answer in faith? Know that He loves you. There are ministers here that are going to be gathered at the front and they're ready to council with you. If you need

to respond to the word of God, as the music plays, you come and you give your heart to Jesus and you confess Jesus as Lord. He loves you. Come and receive life. Amen.