

1st Sunday in Lent C Reading II

Reading II

[Rom 10:8-13](#)

Brothers and sisters:

What does Scripture say?

*The word is near you,
in your mouth and in your heart*

—that is, the word of faith that we preach—,
for, 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 one believes with the heart and so is justified,
and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

For the Scripture says,

No one who believes in him will be put to shame.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek;
the same Lord is Lord of all,
enriching all who call upon him.

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Jerome’s Biblical Commentary

104 (ii) *Israel’s failure is derived from its own culpable refusal* (10:1-21). Paul has considered Israel’s failure to accept Christ from the standpoint of God; it does not mean that God’s promises have failed, nor that this was not foreseen by him in his gratuitous election of Israel. Paul now elaborates the reason for Israel’s failure already sketched in 9:30-33. An expression of sorrow opens the chapter, for Israel has failed to recognize that Christ is the end of the Law and that salvific uprightness has been made possible through him (10:1-4). The old way of obtaining uprightness was difficult, but the new way is easy, within the reach of all, announced to all, as Scripture itself shows (10:5-13). But Israel did not take advantage of the opportunity offered by the prophets and the gospel; and so she is inexcusable (10:14-21).

105 **1-4.** Israel has failed to recognize that uprightness comes through Christ, the end of the Law. **1.** *that they may be saved:* The explicit inclusion of the Jews in the Christian view of God’s plan of salvation (cf. 1 Thes 5:9; Rom 1:16). **2.** *they have a zeal for God:* Paul could speak from experience (Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:9). Cf. 1 Mc 1:26-27. *not*

intelligent: Lit., “not according to knowledge” (epignōsis), i.e., a real knowledge that recognizes the actual relation of man to God as it has now been revealed in Christ Jesus.**3. in their ignorance of God’s uprightness**: This has often been understood of a communication of God’s uprightness to men (i.e., the Jews did not realize that the genuine status of uprightness is not achieved by their own efforts, but conferred by God). But the expression “God’s uprightness” should be compared with Phil 3:9, where it is clearly “uprightness that comes from God.” Paul does not use the prepositional phrase here, but, as elsewhere in Rom (1:17; 3:5, 21-26), speaks of the misunderstanding of the divine attribute. The Jews have missed the real meaning of God’s salvific bounty; so they refused to submit to it. This is what they are now called on to do, and not spend themselves in vain efforts to achieve their own uprightness (see S. Lyonnet, *VD* 25[1947] 18-21).**4. Christ is the end of the Law**: In two senses: (1) In a temporal sense, since the period of the Torah has ended and that of the Messiah has begun (cf. Gal 3:23). The time when the Law of Moses dominated men’s lives with its demand of legal uprightness is terminated, superseded by Christ (cf. Eph 2:15; Jn 1:17). (2) In a final sense, the Law finds its teleological destiny in Christ (cf. Gal 3:24-25; AG 819). In him the Law finds its fulfillment (cf. Mt 5:17; Rom 3:31; 8:4). Of the two senses the first is predominant, since it is part of Paul’s vision of man’s history (→ Pauline Theology, 79:13, 41). Christ is the eschatological event superseding the Law, but the Jews have not recognized that the old order of things is no more. *that anyone who has faith can be upright*: Lit., “unto uprightness for every believer.” The prized status of uprightness before God is now available to everyone (cf. Rom 1:16). As in Gal 2:16; Rom 3:22, 28; 9:32, this is achieved not through the Law but through “faith.”

106 5-13. The new way of uprightness, open to all, is easy, as Scripture shows. *Moses writes*: Lv 18:5, also quoted in Gal 3:12, promises life to men who strive for legal uprightness. The practical observance of the Torah’s prescriptions was a necessary condition for the life so promised. Implied in the quotation is the arduous nature of that condition. In contrast with this demand, the new way of uprightness does not ask of man anything so arduous. To illustrate this point, Paul alludes to Moses’ words in the Torah (Dt 30:11-14). Just as Moses tried to convince the Israelites that the observance of the Law did not demand one to scale the heights or descend to the depths, so Paul plays with Moses’ words, applying them in an accommodated sense to Christ himself. The heights have been scaled and the depths have been plumbed, for Christ has come to the world of man and has been raised from the dead. Man is not asked to bring about an incarnation and a resurrection; he is asked only to accept in faith what has already been done for him and identify himself with Christ (Incarnate and Risen), who is man’s salvation and uprightness. Paul adds an allusion to Ps 107:26 in his midrashic explanation of Dt. In this explanation “Christ” is substituted for the “word” of the Torah. (See S. Lyonnet, in *Mélanges bibliques* [Fest. A. Robert; Paris, 1957] 494-506.)**9. if you**

VD Verbum domini

AG W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957)

Fest. Festschrift (generic name for *any* publication honoring a person)

acknowledge: That is, utter the basic Christian confession of faith and mean it. Paul proceeds to cite the credal (baptismal?) formula of the early Palestinian churches, Kyrios Iēsous (Jesus is the Lord); cf. 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11; L. Cerfaux, *Christ*, 20. An inward faith is demanded that will guide the whole man; but it is also an assent to an expression of that faith. The man seeking justification and salvation is called on to acknowledge Christ as the Risen Kyrios and as the source of salvation precisely as the one raised from the dead by the Father. Again, Paul asserts the efficiency of the Father in Christ's resurrection (→ Pauline Theology, 79:72).**10.** This verse formulates rhetorically the relation of man's uprightness and salvation to his faith and the profession of it. The balance stresses certain aspects of the one basic act of personal adherence to Christ and its effect. One should not overstress the distinction between justification and salvation, or between faith and profession.**11.** *no one who believes in him will be put to shame*: Is 28:16 is used again; cf. 9:33. Paul modifies the quotation by adding pas (all), thus emphasizing the universality of the application: "not...all" = "no one." In the words referred to the precious cornerstone laid by Yahweh in Zion; they are accommodated by Paul to faith in Christ and used as an assurance of salvation for the Christian believer. The addition of the word pas prepares for the next verse.**12.** *no distinction between Jew and Greek*: As far as the opportunity to share in the new uprightness through faith is concerned (cf. 3:22-23). *the same Lord*: At first it might seem that Paul is referring to Yahweh, since he uses Jewish expressions, "the Lord of all" (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.4, 2 § 90), "call upon the name of" (1 Sm 12:17-18; 2 Sm 22:7), and explicitly refers in 10:13 to J1 3:5 (Eng 2:32). But in the context (esp. after 10:9) kyrios can only refer to Jesus, who is the Lord of Jew and Greek (cf. Acts 10:36; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:9-11). In the OT "those who call on the name of the Lord" was a designation of sincere and pious Israelites; in the NT it is transferred to Christians (1 Cor 1:2; Acts 9:14), and the object of it is Christ. The title once reserved for Yahweh is now transferred to Christ; the vv. 12-13 are an eloquent witness to the early Church's worship of Christ as Kyrios. Salvation was expected by the Jews from the kyrios of the OT (Yahweh); they are now told that that salvation comes through him who has been made Kyrios by Yahweh himself (Acts 2:36) as of the resurrection.

Ant. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*

Eng English

OT Old Testament

NT New Testament

Haydock's Catholic Commentary

Romans x.

Notes & Commentary:

Ver. 1. *Is for them.* That is, for *Israel*, or the Israelites, named before. (Witham) --- After having said that the greatest part of Israel was cast off by the Almighty, the apostle, to shew that he meant not to insult or provoke them, here testifies that he sympathizes in their misery, and with groans prays in their behalf to the Lord, that he would vouchsafe to grant them understanding, and open their eyes to the truth. Thus, though tenderly affected towards his countrymen, still he could not dissemble the truth, or flatter them in their incredulity, and hardness of heart. (Calmet)

Ver. 2. *According to knowledge, &c.* The Jews ran with ardour in the paths of the law, but saw not whither they were going; they followed the law, but did not know whither it conducted them. (Calmet)

Ver. 3. *The justice of God.* That is, the justice which God giveth us through Christ; as, on the other hand, the Jews' *own justice* is that which they pretended to by their own strength, or by the observance of the law, without faith in Christ. (Challoner) --- *Seeking to establish their own.* That is, for *justice*, or to be justified by their works, or the works of their written law. (Witham)

Ver. 5-7. *Moses (Leviticus xviii. 12.[5.?.]) wrote that the justice which is of the law....shall live by it.* That is, shall have the recompense of a long temporal life, or even an everlasting life, by joining a faith in Christ their Redeemer, that was to come. *But the justice which is of faith, speaketh thus,* that is, Moses speaketh thus of it, (Deuteronomy xxx.) *say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? &c.* the apostle gives us the spiritual sense of the words, by adding, *to bring Christ down, &c.* The sense is, that it is now fulfilled in the new law, when Christ is come from heaven by his incarnation, and is also again risen from the *abyss* by his resurrection: and therefore,

Ver. 8. *The word is near thee,* is near to every one, who to be justified and saved, need but believe, and comply with the doctrine of the gospel which we preach, and make a *confession* or profession of it *with his mouth;* and then whether he hath been Jew or Gentile, he shall not be confounded. (Witham)

Ver. 9. *Thou shalt be saved.* To confess the Lord Jesus, and to call upon the name of the Lord, (ver. 13.) is not barely the professing of a belief in the person of Christ: but moreover implies a belief of his whole doctrine, and an obedience to his law; without which the calling of him Lord will save no man. (St. Matthew vii. 21.) (Challoner) --- This passage must be understood like many others of this apostle, of a faith accompanied by a good-will ready to perform what faith says must be practised; as it is required in this

very place, that what we believe in the heart, we should confess with our mouth.
(Estius)

Ver. 14. &c. *Or how shall they believe, &c.* He shews the necessity of preachers, and that all true preachers must *be sent*, and have their mission from God. --- *Who hath believed our report?* [1] Literally, *our hearing?* Some expound it thus: who hath believed the things we have heard from God, and which we have preached? The common interpretation is, who hath believed what he hath heard from us? (Witham)

Ver. 15. *Unless they be sent.* Here is an evident proof against all new teachers, who have all usurped to themselves the ministry, without any lawful mission, derived by succession from the apostles, to whom Christ said, (John xx. 21.) *As my Father hath sent me, I also send you.* (Challoner) --- The Almighty sends people to preach two different ways. The one is extraordinary by internal inspiration, as was that of John the Baptist, and all the other prophets; in which case, however, extraordinary proofs must be given that they are sent by God; and the other is ordinary, which is derived from Christ, and from the apostles and their successors, whom he has appointed to be his vicegerents on earth. (Estius)

Ver. 18. *But I say, have they not heard?* He puts an objection, and by his answer shews the Jews are inexcusable in not believing, since the gospel has been preached all the world over, and in places where the Jews were, as it was foretold: and also because the Gentiles every where have believed; which even excites you Jews to jealousy against them, as Moses foretold: (Deuteronomy xxxii. 21.) that is, when you now see, that the Gentiles, whom you despised so much, by believing in Christ, have received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, of working miracles, of speaking tongues, of prophecy, &c. (Witham)

Ver. 19. A people whom you have always despised, as not being worthy to be numbered amongst mankind, I will make my beloved people. I will enrich with my graces those whom you have contemned; I will give them the grace of adoption, thus to stir you up to jealousy and rage. And in effect, what greater rage ever was there, than that of the Jews against the converted Gentiles? In persecution, the Jews were always most busy. Thus were the Jews plainly informed of the truth of the gospel, by the Gentiles converted before their face. (Calmet)

Ver. 21. After the preaching of Christ, and his apostles, after so many wonders wrought by our Saviour, he at last offers himself to the Jewish people, with stretched-out hands, and yet they cannot be induced to believe in him. They resist him as much as they can, thus verifying the prophecy of holy Simeon, that he should be set up as a sign to be contradicted. (Luke ii.) (Estius)

[1] Ver. 16. *Quis credidit auditui nostro? te akoe emon?*

THE MISTAKEN ZEAL

Romans 10:1–13

Brothers, the desire of my heart for the Jews and my prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I do say this for them—that they do have a zeal for God, but it is not a zeal which is based on a real knowledge. For they do not realize that a man can only achieve the status of righteousness by God's gift, and they seek to establish their own status, and so they have not submitted themselves to that power of God which alone can make them righteous in his sight. For Christ is the end of the whole system of law, for he came to bring everyone who believes and trusts into a right relationship with God. Moses writes that the man who works at the righteousness which stems from faith shall live by it. But the righteousness which stems from faith speaks like this—"Do not say in your heart, 'Who shall go up into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or, 'Who shall go down into the deep abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ again from among the dead)." But what does it say? "The word is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart." And that word is the message of faith which we proclaim. This word of faith is our message, that, if you acknowledge with your mouth that *Jesus is Lord*, and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For belief with the heart is the way to a right relationship with God, and confession with the mouth is the way to salvation, For scripture says, "Every one who believes in him will not be put to shame," for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord over all, and he has ample resources for all who call upon him. For "every one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

PAUL has been saying some hard things about the Jews. He has been telling them truths which were difficult for them to hear and bear. The whole passage from Romans 9 to 11 is a condemnation of the Jewish attitude to religion. Yet from beginning to end there is no anger in it; there is nothing but wistful longing and heartfelt yearning. It is Paul's one desire that the Jews may be saved.

If ever we are to bring men to the Christian faith, our attitude must be the same. Great preachers have known this. "Don't scold," said one. "Always remember to keep your voice down," said another. A great present-day preacher called preaching "pleading with men." Jesus wept over Jerusalem. There is a preaching which blasts the sinner with tempestuously angry words; but always Paul speaks the truth in love.

Paul was entirely ready to admit that the Jews were zealous for God; but he also saw that their zeal was a misdirected thing. Jewish religion was based on meticulous obedience to the law. Now it is clear that that obedience could be given only by a man who was desperately in earnest about his religion. It was not an; easy thing; it must often have been made extremely inconvenient; and it must often have made life very uncomfortable.

Take the Sabbath law. It was laid down exactly how far a man could walk on the Sabbath. It was laid down that he must lift no burden which weighed more than two dried figs. It was laid down that no food must be cooked on the Sabbath. It was laid down that, in the event of sickness, measures might be taken to keep the patient from becoming worse, but not to make him better. To this day there are strict orthodox Jews in this country who will not poke or mend a fire on the Sabbath or switch on a light. If a fire has to be poked a Gentile is employed to do it. If a Jew is wealthy enough he will sometimes instal a time switch to switch on the lights at dusk on Sabbath without his doing so himself.

This is not something to smile at, but to admire. The way of the law was not easy. No one would undertake it at all unless he was supremely in earnest. Zealous the Jews were and are. Paul had no difficulty in granting that, but the zeal was misdirected and misapplied.

In the Fourth Book of *Maccabees* there is an amazing incident. Eleazar the priest was brought before Antiochus Epiphanes whose aim was to stamp out Jewish religion. Antiochus ordered him to eat pork. The old man refused. "No, not if you pluck out my eyes, and consume my bowels in the fire. We, O Antiochus," he said, "who live under a divine law, consider no compulsion to be so forcible as obedience to our law." If he had to die, his fathers would receive him "holy and pure." He was ordered to be beaten. "His flesh was torn off by the whips, and he streamed down with blood, and his flanks were laid open by wounds." He fell and a soldier kicked him. In the end the soldiers so pitied him that they brought him dressed meat, which was not pork, and told him to eat it and say that he had eaten pork. He refused. He was in the end killed. "I am dying by fiery torments for thy law's sake," he prayed to God. "He resisted," says the writer, "even to the agonies of death, for the law's sake."

And what was all this about? *It was about eating pork.* It seems incredible that a man should die like that for a law like that. But the Jews did so die. Truly they had a zeal for the law. No man can say that they were not desperately in earnest about their service to God.

The whole Jewish approach was that by this kind of obedience to the law a man earned credit with God. Nothing shows better the Jewish attitude than the three classes into which they divided mankind. There were those who were good, whose balance was on the right side; there were those who were bad, whose balance was on the debit side; there were those who were in between, who, by doing one more good work, could become good. It was all a matter of law and achievement. To this Paul answers: "Christ is the end of the law." What he meant was: "Christ is the end of legalism." The relationship between God and man is no longer the relationship between a creditor and a debtor, between an earner and an assessor, between a judge and a man standing at the bar of judgment. Because of Jesus Christ, man is no longer faced with the task of satisfying God's justice; he need only accept his love. He has no longer to win God's favour; he need simply take the grace and love and mercy which he freely offers.

To make his point Paul uses two Old Testament quotations. First, he quotes Leviticus 18:5 where it says that, if a man meticulously obeys the commandments of the law, he will find life. That is true—but *no one ever has*. Then he quotes Deuteronomy 30:12, 13. Moses is saying the God's law is not inaccessible and impossible; it is there in a man's mouth and life and heart. Paul allegorizes that passage. It was not our effort which brought Christ into the world or raised him from the dead. It is not our effort which wins us goodness. The thing is done for us, and we have only to accept.

Verses 9 and 10 are of prime importance. They give us the basis of the first Christian creed.

(i) A man must say *Jesus Christ is Lord*. The word for Lord is *kurios*. This is the key word of early Christianity. It has four stages of meaning. (a) It is the normal title of respect like the English *sir*, the French *monsieur*, the German *herr*. (b) It is the normal title of the Roman Emperors. (c) It is the normal title of the Greek gods, prefaced before the god's name. *Kurios Serapis* is Lord Serapis. (d) In the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures it is the regular translation of the divine name, Jahveh or Jehovah. So, then, if a man called Jesus *kurios* he was ranking him with the Emperor and with God; he was giving him the supreme place in his life; he was pledging him implicit obedience and reverent worship. To call Jesus *kurios* was to count him unique. First, then, a man to be a Christian must have a sense of the utter *uniqueness* of Jesus Christ.

(ii) A man must believe that Jesus is risen from the dead. The resurrection was an essential of Christian belief. The Christian must believe not only that Jesus *lived*, but also that he *lives*. He must not only know *about Christ*. He must *know* him. He is not studying an historical personage, however great; he is living with a real presence. He must know not only Christ *the martyr*: he must know Christ *the victor*, too.

(iii) But a man must not only believe in his heart; he must confess with his lips. Christianity is belief plus confession; it involves witness before men. Not only God, but also our fellow men, must know what side we are on.

A Jew would find it hard to believe that the way to God was not through the law; this way of trust and of acceptance was shatteringly and incredibly new to him. Further, he would have real difficulty in believing that the way to God was open to *everybody*. The Gentiles did not seem to him to be in the same position as the Jews at all. So Paul concludes his argument by citing two Old Testament texts to prove his case. First, he cites Isaiah 28:16: "Every one who *believes* in him will not be put to shame." There is nothing about law there; it is all based on faith. Second, he cites Joel 2:32: "*All* who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered." There is no limitation there; the promise is to *everyone*; therefore, there is no difference between Jew and Greek.

In essence this passage is an appeal to the Jews to abandon the way of legalism and accept the way of grace. It is an appeal to them to see that their zeal is misplaced.

It is an appeal to listen to the prophets who long ago declared that faith is the only way to God, and that that way is open to every man.