

All You Gotta Do Is Call. Maybe.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Is it enough to say you have faith in Jesus as Lord? Do all the people who profess faith, who come to worship on Sundays and sing the songs and bow their heads in prayer, do they all really belong to Jesus; or is it the case, as some Bible passages indicate, that hypocrisy is always a possibility? Such that, even though to our human eyes a person looks sincere in his or her faith, could such a person be a stranger in God's eyes? Today on *Groundwork* as we continue to look at seemingly contradictory texts in scripture, we will ponder the question: Are all who call on the name of the Lord saved? Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee, and Dave, we are coming into, now, the third program in this series of contradictory texts. Passages from different parts of the Bible that, if you bring them next to each other, seem to say opposite things; and we will get right into it today and listen first to a few words from the Apostle Paul.

DAVE BAST

Yes, I do not think it will be too hard to pick up which are the contradictory texts in these two passages that we are going to read. They are both actually quite familiar; great passages of scripture. The first is Romans 10 beginning at verse 9:

If you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹As scripture says, anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame. ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. ¹³For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now, we have our Lord Jesus himself here in Matthew 7, part of the Sermon on the Mount, and listen to these words from Matthew 7, starting at the 15th verse:

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire, ²⁰and thus by their fruit you will recognize them. ²¹Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³And then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you; away from me, you evildoers!’”

DAVE BAST

Well, there it is; pretty clear, Scott. On the one hand you have this great Bible strand of teaching as Paul articulates it. All you have to do is call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved. He is talking about

believing. It is what has given rise to what is sometimes called the sinner's prayer. How do you become a Christian? How are you saved? Well, you just have to get on your knees and pray this prayer: Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I confess and I call on you for salvation. And he undergirds this with quotations from the Old Testament; whoever believes will be saved. Everyone who calls will be saved. So, that is one strand, and it is certainly something that we hold dear and believe.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and then, we have Jesus, near the end of the Sermon on the Mount here – almost at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount – giving this warning that apparently there are some people who maybe even seem to think they are on the Lord's side; they call out to him, "Lord, Lord;" they claim they do works in his name, and yet Jesus says, "No, I do not know you." So, we have to wonder about the people who cry out to the Lord. Paul says, "If they cry out to the Lord, that is evidence that they are saved." Jesus says, "Not so fast," and so, we need to wonder about that.

Let's just begin, first of all, in wondering about – let's get at Paul first, and then we will go to Jesus second.

DAVE BAST

He does not just say that it is evidence that they are saved; he says that is the act that actually saves them, or that seems to be what he is indicating. But he goes on. He is putting this in the context of the importance of the Gospel ministry; the importance of preaching; because he says in the next section: How can they call on somebody they have never heard of if they do not believe in Christ? In order to believe and call, they have to hear; they have to hear the Gospel. So, he is talking about the importance of mission.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, if we widen out the focus here in Romans, Paul has gone through the whole sequence of can people save themselves? No. He got to the climax of it all in Romans Chapter 8:

¹There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. If you are in Christ Jesus, nothing can separate you from the love of God; Jesus is it. Jesus is the Messiah; Jesus is the path to salvation. Good; and we have that soaring conclusion to Romans 8; but then, in Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul calls a time-out and he says: Okay, but now what about Israel? What about the covenant people, the sons and daughters of Abraham? What about my own people who have rejected Jesus as the Messiah?

DAVE BAST

By and large, by this time, by the time Paul writes Romans, it had become clear that after the first generation or so when most of the Christians were Jewish – now, no, wait a minute – the Gentiles have tipped the scales; so now it is majority Gentile, and that was pretty much it as far as most Jews were concerned. They wanted no part of this, and so they had turned against the Gospel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it hurt Paul; it agonized Paul; it wounded Paul; and so, in these chapters – and they are tortured chapters, 9, 10, and 11 of Romans – he agonizes and wrestles with the question: Is there any way we can conceive that the Jewish people will still come to see that Jesus is that Messiah they have been waiting for all along? He never quite solves it. We do not need to go into all of that; but at this point in his argument – those verses you just read, Dave, from Romans 10, where everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved – what he is concluding is, you still preach. Just keep preaching Jesus to the Jewish people; to everybody; but to the Jewish people, too. Because you never know; they cannot believe if they do not hear, so we have to let them hear; just keep preaching; just keep preaching. Paul believed in the power of preaching. Paul believed that that was the Spirit's chosen avenue to get at people's hearts. So, just keep preaching; and when it works, when the Spirit is in the preaching, when the Spirit pierces the person's heart and they respond to a sermon, they respond to the Gospel by saying, "Jesus is Lord," Paul says: That is it. There it is. That is salvation.

DAVE BAST

And he points out a couple of additional things: There is no distinction, he says, between Jew and Gentile. This is a radical statement...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Everybody gets in the same way...

DAVE BAST

This is the Pauline Gospel in a nutshell. Jews do not have the advantage, Gentiles are no longer excluded, but it is the same for everybody. They come on the same basis, and that is the understanding that Jesus is Lord, the belief that God raised him from the dead because that was the conclusive proof that Jesus is Lord; and he will go on to say, wrapping up his argument here in Chapter 10, that the reason his fellow countrymen are not being saved is because they refuse to believe. And so, the problem is not with the Gospel, the problem is not that they have not heard, because he says they have heard; we have been preaching to them, but it is that they have chosen not to believe, and in fact, this is what Isaiah prophesied; so, he will quote from Isaiah later in Chapter 10. So, the Gospel is vindicated, and as you point out, the great need is: Let's go on preaching. This is one of the great missionary passages of the New Testament. It is a warrant for us to share the Gospel with everyone because this is God's vehicle for saving people.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul says when we can get somebody to say, "Oh Lord, Lord, Lord, Jesus is Lord," that is salvation; but then again, Matthew 7 and an apparent wrinkle of contradiction here in the Bible when Jesus says: Yes, but some people will say that and it will not be true. We will take that up in just a moment.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

I am Dave Bast, along with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are dealing with some of the contradictory texts of the Bible. It is a wonderful way of getting at some of the complexity and depth. The Bible is a straightforward book in many ways, but it is not a simple book, and it is only a superficial acquaintance with it that would let you fall into that error. There is some real depth here, and that is why for two thousand years Christians have struggled with it. We have had whole theologies and all the rest as we seek to come to grips with the depths of God's riches in Christ as proclaimed in the scriptures.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we believe that the Holy Spirit, who inspired scripture, Old Testament and New, we believe that the Spirit inspired scripture in such a way as to cover the scope and the breadth of human life and human experience before God. That means, by its very nature, by its very purpose, scripture has to encounter and countenance and cover lots of different circumstances. In Romans 10, Paul was covering how it usually works with preaching: Proclaim the good news about Jesus and if they accept and say yes, Jesus is Lord, Paul says that is evidence that they have been touched by grace; but, that is not the only situation we ever encounter in church and in life; and so, in Matthew 7, Jesus has to take up another possibility, and it is called hypocrisy.

DAVE BAST

Right, exactly. So, you could conclude, if you just took Romans 10 on its own without comparing it – and by the way, one of the great principles of scriptural interpretation is that you have to compare scripture with scripture; that is essentially what we are doing; just in a dramatic way in this series – if you just took Romans 10, you would say well, all you have to do – it is pretty formulaic – you just repeat these words. Pray the sinner's prayer; try to mean it; muster up sincerity in your heart if you can, and you are good to go. That is it; no problems; nothing to worry about; go ahead and live your life the way you want. Jesus says: Whoa, way a minute. Just a second. It is more than just verbal. It is more than just skin deep, this matter of genuine salvation; of actual transformation; and it is a reminder of what James says, really, as the core of his letter:

Faith without works is dead. So, mere profession without practice, Jesus is reminding us, is of no avail.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In scripture, curiously, but also if you actually think about it, alarmingly, there seems to be two kinds of hypocrisy. There is the possibility of self-conscious hypocrisy; you are a fake and you know it; but hey, this family that I know that I want to get something from, I want to get in their will; or my wife's parents are Christians, so I will go to church and I will mouth the Creed and I will stand there when the baby gets baptized, but I do not really believe it in my heart. I am just going along to get along, and if I thought about it hard enough, I could imagine never going to church again and it would not bother me. That would be a self-conscious hypocrite; somebody who says the Apostles' Creed when everybody else does, but does not really mean it.

But, scarily enough, there is also hypocrisy described often in scripture that is founded on self-deception. You really do think you are on the Lord's side and you are doing it all right; and yet, something is wrong. It is not all that deep after all. It has not really taken root. That is a little sobering when you consider that kind because it makes all of us examine our own hearts.

DAVE BAST

And if you look at what Jesus says here at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in the closing section where he is trying to drive home the truths of what he has been saying, he has been telling his disciples: This is how you need to live. I am talking about the way a disciple lives; you claim to be my follower; you claim to be a disciple; you have called out, "Lord, Lord;" you have prayed the prayer. Well, here is how it shows up in the way it transforms your life, and it is pretty tough stuff: Love your enemies. Turn the other cheek. All of that stuff.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is the fruit, and if it is not there – Jesus said, the good fruit – and if it is not there, then it is not a good tree; and certainly, if there is bad fruit, it is a bad tree; good trees do not make bad fruit and vice versa. This is what the Old Testament prophets often got at. You might remember when Jesus cleansed the Temple in Matthew 21, a little later in the same Gospel from which we read earlier, he will accuse the religious leaders of the day of having turned the Temple into a den of robbers, which sometimes we do not know what that is, but that is a reference back to, I think it is Jeremiah who said to the people of his day: Look, you come to the Temple and you think it is like a hideout from your sin. You are like guys who just robbed a bank and now this is your hideout where you think God is not going to see and he is going to forgive you because as long as you show up at church and dance around saying, 'This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord,' just keep repeating it, then everything is going to be fine and God will not pay any attention to how you live the rest of the week when you cheat the poor and cheat on your wife and do all this bad stuff. Jeremiah is saying: No, God does see; and Jesus is saying: No, you cannot just call me. 'Oh, what a friend I have in Jesus; aren't we friends, Jesus? Aren't we buddies? Huh?' And Jesus said: Not the way you live. There is no real faith in your heart at all, no matter what you say.

DAVE BAST

Right. He is saying, in effect, the modern equivalent, the Christian equivalent of those people in Jeremiah's day are those who take refuge in some profession of faith; some: Oh, I walked the aisle once upon a time, or I stood up in front of the church or made a profession of my faith, and that makes it all good; and it is a hideout for living a life along the lines of your own greed or sin or ego or whatever. So, Jesus is disallowing that, and alarmingly, he is even suggesting here you can be a Christian leader; you can be a well-known person. "Didn't we do these great works in your name, Lord? Didn't we cast out demons in your name?"

SCOTT HOEZEE

"Look at my résumé."

DAVE BAST

Yes, right. And he says: I do not think I know you.

Scott Hoezee:

If he had not thrown in that last part, it is still a hard passage, but that last part, where they claim – now, I suppose we could say they were just making that up, but let's say they were not – they claim that they cast out demons in Jesus' name, and maybe they apparently did, and still they were fakes? That makes it a very, very hard thing; but, what that also says to me – and this raises the question of what we want to talk about in the last segment of this program – what that also says to me is, can we trust our human eyes all the time; or where are we left, both in looking at our own lives, but also in interacting with other people in the church; where does that leave us? Let's just take Matthew 7 head-on and say these people whom Jesus rejects as people he did not know – let's say they really were doing outwardly spiritual things – what are we supposed to make of that?

DAVE BAST

I think we can probably understand this. You and I have both led churches as pastors and have had, to some degree, roles in leadership as ministers of the word; and you know as well as I do, Scott, that religious performance is fairly easy at times to put on without the reality of inner change and transformation. You can do a lot outwardly for God without necessarily being as far along in the hard work of obeying Jesus and following humbly in his footsteps and doing the things – the one who does the works of my Father, Jesus says here – that is the one whose faith is real.

There is a character in *Pilgrim's Progress* called Talkative, and he is a false Christian because it is all talk. "I can quote 100 scriptures," he says at one point, and Bunyan comments on him that the soul of religion is the practicing of it; it is the doing; it is the obedience; it is the walking in the way that Jesus walked. We stumble and fall, we fail, we often fall short, but we just have to keep turning back to God in repentance instead of blustering on.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When we come back, we will bring these two texts more directly together to say what does this tell us insofar as there is a warning here, but also an encouragement to profess faith in Jesus as Lord. How do we bring them together, and what ultimately, practically, can we take away? So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Dave, as we bring this show in for a conclusion, we want to bring these two things together. It is true that the outward profession of Jesus as Lord ordinarily does mean exactly what Paul in Romans 10 said it means.

That is a believer. There is another passage elsewhere in scripture where I think it was Paul who said:

Nobody can say, Jesus is Lord unless the Holy Spirit gives that person the ability to say it and to believe it; and yet, Jesus also warns us in Matthew 7: Some people who say that... They are like Talkative in *Pilgrim's Progress*, as you just mentioned – it is just talk; but what are we supposed to do with this as believers? Are we just supposed to be jaded and suspicious about everybody else in the church to say, "Yeah, well, she seems like a saint, but who knows?" Is that what we are supposed to do?

DAVE BAST

Here is one thing I would suggest that we are supposed to do. We should not read Jesus and conclude from that: Well, you do not need to call on the name of the Lord.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Okay, let's get that one out of the way.

DAVE BAST

Better keep still. No, nothing that Jesus says detracts from the fact that salvation is found in his name and his name alone. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, as Acts says. So, call on the name of the Lord, by all means; just believe in Jesus. It just has to be sincere, that is all.

We were talking in an earlier program in this series about the fact that only God can really enable us to believe. That it takes a work of grace even to quicken faith in us; and we should have confidence. I would like to speak a word to the person who may be a little bit worried, and think, "Wow, how do I know if it is real? Maybe I am a hypocrite. Oh, dear. Maybe I will be condemned in the last days." You do not take counsel of fears like that. If your heart is genuine and authentic, and you really do love him, take comfort in that. Look to Christ, do not look to yourself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is what I would say to people, and I do not mean to be cavalier about this, but, every once in a while you would encounter as a pastor someone who said, "What if I accidentally committed the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit?" My quick reply to that is, "If you are worried you did, you did not do it."

DAVE BAST

Then you haven't, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I do not think you can do it by accident, for one thing; but also, the fact that you are worried about it shows that the Spirit is still active and kicking in your heart, because otherwise you would not even care. So, this should not generate fear. We should not spend our days biting our fingernails, saying, "What if at the last day he says that to me? 'Depart, I never knew you.'" But, on the other hand, I do not think we should take away from this program and from this theme about who really is sincere in their profession of Jesus as Lord – I do not think we should take away from this that we should only worry about other people or be suspicious of others. We should start with ourselves; make sure that the fruit of our faith is being shown in our own lives; that our own connection with Jesus is living and daily and intense. Take care of good old number one first of all, and then, if we run into other people, or maybe see some high-profile preacher on TV, or maybe know somebody whose genuineness of the profession we wonder about for various reasons – and we could make a list, I guess, of things that could tip you off to make you wonder – well, okay, we could think that that might be somebody who fits into the category of those who say, "Lord, Lord," but Jesus does not know them, but I do not think we should take on airs about that. We should pray for those people. Pray we are wrong, for one thing, but pray that, indeed, the faith is genuine, and that if, for whatever the reason somebody is faking it, or is self-deceived and is not really living it out, that somehow the Spirit will do something to revive a genuine fervor in that person. So, always to approach this through compassion, not through sorting people out willy-nilly or taking a judgmental attitude; prayer and compassion and hope, I think, is our proper posture.

DAVE BAST

We could take a cue, probably, from the disciples in the upper room when Jesus said to them, "One of you is going to betray me," nobody said, "Lord, is it Judas?" Or, "is it Peter?" They all said, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?" So, the first takeaway from Jesus' warning is to look at our own hearts; examine ourselves; confess where we have been hypocritical, perhaps; where we have been playing a bit of a role rather than being authentic. Mourn for our own shortcomings and short-fallings; and ask God for his grace and his forgiveness, and ask the Lord Jesus for his Spirit to enable us to be more obedient; to be authentic. I want an undivided heart. All too often my heart is divided and I know I am not doing it the way I should be doing it; so, let's get back at it. I love that line – we actually quoted this passage in the last program, where many are leaving Jesus because of his hard sayings and they cannot handle what he is telling them about himself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, in John 6.

DAVE BAST

Right; and he turns to his disciples and says, “Well, are you going to leave, too?” and Peter, good old Peter, he could come through, says, “Lord, where else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

If you are genuinely at that point where you just feel like, “I have nowhere else to go, Lord; I want to be with you,” then you are okay. You are not in danger, here.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We should celebrate that faith, too, wherever we see it and find it. There is a lot of judgmentalism these days; a lot of provincialism; sometimes it happens that we look at Christians who worship differently than we do, look different than we are, have a little different theology than we do, and sometimes we are judging, but I think this program and the last program can call us back to say: You know, whenever we find somebody who says, “Jesus is Lord,” let’s celebrate that. Let’s believe it! Let’s believe the best about it, and let’s celebrate the fact that the Spirit of God is on the move, because if people say, “Jesus is Lord,” it is the Spirit who enabled it, and thanks be to God that that Spirit is on the move.

DAVE BAST

Right. Well, thanks for joining our *Groundwork* conversation today. I am Dave Bast, with Scott Hoezee, and we would like to know how we can help you continue digging deeper into scripture. Visit groundworkonline.com to tell us what topics or passages you would like to dig into next on *Groundwork*.

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