

Who Can Join the Church

Romans 10:9-11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, May 7, 2017

Alright, well, if you're new to us this morning, welcome to Grace Fellowship Church. We're so glad you're here. We are actually on the back half of the series called "Foundations of the Church", where we're looking at some foundational or fundamental issues of our church. This is kind of one of the last sermons in this series. I told you before, you guys have done a great job laying the foundation here at Grace Fellowship Church. You've done a great job laying the groundwork and I don't want to take away from any of that, I just want to add to it here. You can never have too much ground to stand on, amen? You can never have too firm a foundation. So that's what we're building here together, we're building on top of the foundation we already have, and to do that, so far, we've talked about what the church is and what the church does. We've talked about how the church is different from the world and how it's different from the parachurch. And we've talked about the messiness of the church and the necessity of the church and the leadership of the church. If you've missed any of this, you can go online and listen to it.

Last week, we talked about Biblical eldership and what an elder is and what an elder does and how someone can serve as an elder, which was important to talk about, and this week we're gonna look at all this from a different angle and we're gonna begin to talk about church membership. We're gonna lay another piece in the foundation and talk a little bit about church membership this week and next week. We've talked about what an elder is, but what is a church member? Have you ever thought about that? What does it take to be part of the church? What are the job requirements? What are the credentials? How do you become a member? How do you join the church? It's an important question because if you think about it, we don't have any members yet at Grace Fellowship, not any official members anyway. We have unofficial ones, many of you are so committed to this church we couldn't call you anything but members, but we don't have an official process yet. And so this is something new for all of us. So how do we go about doing this? How do we go about setting it up? Or better yet, how do we go about doing it the right way?

A story is told of three pastors who got together to discuss a bat problem in their church. Their church was infested with bats and they were talking about how to get rid of them. So the first pastor said, "Well, I got a shotgun and I shot at them but it didn't work. I couldn't get rid of them, they're still there." The second pastor said, "Well, I tried trapping them and releasing them into the wild but that didn't work either, they're still there." And, finally, the third pastor said, "Well, I found a way to get rid of them, I simply baptized them and made them members. And they all left. I never saw them again." I'm glad you guys got that. But how do we keep from doing that here? How do we keep people from joining and flying away? How do we keep them from becoming members and leaving? Well, let's talk about that. Let's talk about church membership and we'll begin by talking about who can join the church.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Romans chapter 10, Romans chapter 10. And as you're doing that, the Bible says that Christians can join the church, and if you're wondering who can join, I'll go ahead and answer the question for you, believers can join, followers of Jesus Christ. If you

read through the New Testament, you'll see that the only people who became members of churches were Christians. It doesn't say that in any one particular passage, it's just implied all over the place. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12, let me just read some passages to you. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, which I've quoted to you several times, says, "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members are one, though there are many, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greek, slave or free." I think it goes without saying that only applies to Christians. And that's what that passage means. You can only be part of us if you're part of Christ, that makes sense? You guys follow me? You can only be part of this body if you're part of His body. Romans 12:3-6 says the same thing, "For through the grace given to me I say to every one of you not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought; but to have sound judgment ... for just as we have many members in one body and all do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ." Again, one body many members in Christ. The church is for those who are in Christ. Colossians 1:18 says Jesus Christ is the head of the body, the church, you can't get into the body if you're not part connected to the head. You can't get into the church if you're not part of Him. You get the idea. You can't join the church unless you are a believer. Unless you're born again.

To say it another way, we're not looking for perfect people to join our church. We're not looking for angels. We're just looking for Christians. We're looking for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And the question we need to ask this morning is, well, how do we find them? How can we tell if someone is a Christian or not? Have you ever wondered that? Is Canada a place where everyone professes to be a Christian, or where lots of people do?

Now, there's a lot of ways to profess to be a Christian today. I don't know if we do this here, but you can do it with T-shirts. Where I come from, everybody has at least one or two Christian T-shirts that they wear to profess their faith in Christ. And they say things like, "In the event of the rapture, you can have this shirt." I think that's pretty good. Or "God answers an email." An email ... that's pretty cheesy. When I was in high school, I had one of these shirts that said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, I am a wide-eyed, sanctified, blood bought, Spirit taught, Bible totin', Scripture quotin', Satan bashin', sin trashin', Christ followin', pride swallowin', hard prayin', truth conveyin', faith walkin', Gospel talkin', big time believer and proud of it!" I had a T-shirt that said that in big bright red letters. That's how you profess your faith in Christ, you can do it with T-shirts, clothing.

Another way is with bumper stickers. You can tell people you're a Christian with bumper stickers. And they say things like, "Are you following Jesus this close?" That was really good actually. I want to get that one or I want to get one that says, "Holy Roller" on the back. Or, "Don't let my car fool you, my treasure is in heaven," but that's another creative way to do it. You can do it with jewellery. I think we've all owned a Christian necklace or two with a cross on it. You can do it with ... There's a big Christian tattoo movement going on now. People want to ... I had a friend in college that had a green tattoo of a cross on his arm. What does the Bible say about this? What does the Scripture say about making your profession of faith? How do we tell if someone is saved?

Well, Romans 10:9-13 tells us the answer. So if you want to read that with me (that was kind of a long introduction to get to our passage) verse 9, Paul writes,

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth He confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." For there's no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The Scriptures teach us that to show you are a Christian, you must confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord. In other words, if you are a Christian, you will show it with your mouth, with what you say. Now, we'll get into what that means in a minute but before we do, just a little background about the book of Romans.

Romans has been called Paul's great work on salvation - his magnum opus. This is where Paul talks about salvation from start to finish. And he explains that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We're saved by faith and not by works. We're delivered from our bondage to sin, given victory through Christ - all these important doctrines of salvation.

And in chapter 10 verse 9, he ties all this together by saying, if you believe all of that ... If you believe you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, if you believe you are saved by faith and not by works, if you believe you've been delivered from sin and given victory through Christ, this is what you will do, you will confess it with your mouth. You won't read a confession, although there's nothing wrong with that. You know the London Baptist Confession, the Westminster Confession, those are all great things but that's not what he's referring to here. He's saying, you will put it in your own words. You won't wear it on a T-shirt (you can do that, that's fine) but that's not what he's talking about. You won't wear it with jewellery or a bumper sticker, you will say it with your mouth. It's been said, that what is down in the well comes up in the bucket. And it's the same way with salvation. If Christ is down in your heart, if He is down in the well, He will come up in the bucket. He will come up in your mouth. You may stumble through it, you may not be able to articulate it perfectly, but you will explain to someone that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Saviour. You will make a confession.

And there are certain elements that it will have in it and that's what I want to talk to you about this morning. In Romans 10:9-13 just to answer our question, who can join the church, I want to give you some conditions for a correct confession. So if you're taking notes, here's a few conditions for a correct confession. If you're wanting to know, how do I confess to Jesus with my mouth? What does that look like? Well, here's a couple of things that it would look like. The first one is this, and it's very simple. You must confess, and I'll explain that here in a minute. That sounds almost too simple, but I'll explain it. You must confess. If you read verse 9 with me, that's exactly what it says and what we've been talking about. "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord ..."

In the Bible, and this is very convicting because I think you say something like 20,000 words a day on average. But in the Bible, the mouth is often described as the barometer of your heart. Some call it the window to the soul. If you want to know what's going on in someone's heart, just listen to the words they say, they'll tell you. Matthew 12:37 says, "For by the words of your mouth, you will be justified, and by the words of your mouth, you will be condemned." The Lord

Jesus Himself said you will go to heaven or hell based on what comes out of your mouth. You will be saved or damned by it. Matthew 15:11 says, "It's not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man," it's not what you're gonna eat for lunch here in a minute, that's not what defiles you. It's what Jesus says, is what proceeds out of the mouth that defiles you.

That word "defile" can translate "ceremoniously unclean." Your mouth can make you unclean ceremoniously before God. Matthew 12:34, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." So, all of this is background for this one, Paul says, "that if you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord, you will be saved." Salvation is demonstrated in your mouth. If you are saved, you will say it.

And I think it makes more sense when you understand what the word "confess" means. In Greek, the word "confess" means "to say the same thing". It's a compound word in Greek, *homologeō*, from *homo* which means "the same", and *logeō* which means "to say." *Homologeō* means "to say the same thing that God does, to agree with Him about salvation." You don't have to agree with Him about everything, that'll come in time, but to be saved, you have to agree with Him about the main things, the important things, the things Paul lays out in the book of Romans, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. You have to agree with God about that. "All" means you. You can put the word "I" in. "I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and I'm justified freely by His grace." That's what a confession is.

Just to give you some examples of a bad confession, of an incorrect one. I read this to you a couple of months ago, but I actually made this one up for our leaders in training at a previous church. But I want to read this to you and I want you to notice what it doesn't say. This can't offend anybody because I made it, I wrote this, this is not someone's actual confession. But it says this:

I grew up in a Christian home where my parents took me to church every Sunday. We also attended church on Wednesday nights, vacation Bible school, summer camp, and I even went to a Christian high school. I was baptized as an infant and confirmed at the age of 13. Throughout my teenage years, I went away from the Lord, but seeing my best friend die of cancer brought me back. As I was leaving the hospital one afternoon, a song came on the radio which said God is love, and I knew that He had a better plan for my life, so the next week at church, I rededicated my life to Him. And since then, I've been blessed to be involved in many activities in the churches where we've attended. I've taught Sunday School, sung in the choir, memorized Scripture with my family, and even served for two years as church treasurer. In 2009, I felt a strong call to a new church when we moved to Central Indiana. (I wrote this at our church in Indiana.) When we drove by and saw the sign for your church, we knew this was a place for us. We look forward to being a part of the ministry here.

Now, as I read that, did you notice what that testimony doesn't say? It doesn't say anything God says about salvation. It doesn't say that "I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." It doesn't say, "I'm saved by faith and not by words." It doesn't say, "I've been delivered from sin and given victory through Jesus Christ." I know it doesn't say that because I wrote it that way. It says, "I went to vacation bible school." It says, "I was baptized as an infant." It says, "I was

confirmed at the age of 13." Listen, friends, none of that stuff saves you. None of it gives you eternal life. The testimony is all about what I did. I grew up in a Christian home. I went to vacation bible school. I, I, I, I. Me, me, me, me, all the glory, all the credit goes to me. Listen, that kind of talk leads people to hell. Again, I'm not saying any of those things are bad, those are all good things, but they need to be put in a proper place, they're not put into the category of saving things. That's all once you do, once you have been saved. See, that's not saying the same thing God says about salvation, that's not agreeing with Him. God does not say, "You were saved by those things."

Now, I want to read to you another testimony. This one is from an actual member of a church I served, and I'm quoting it to you with his permission, but I'm reading it 'cause he does a great job of giving the right way to express this. He says this,

One of the most important things I've learned is that God has known that I could not live up to His law. And I learned that that isn't what He gave it for. I've heard someone explain it this way, the law is a mirror, and that when I hold that mirror up to myself, it allows me to see my sin clearly. He says, "That's why it's not enough to simply know Romans 3:23, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," it needs to be personal. I had to learn that it's talking about me, not just everyone else. That was a hard one for me to learn, to see that I wasn't better than anyone else, that I had done nothing that earned me a better spot, I was in no position to look down on others. In fact, I learned I was the worst sinner of all. That's the point when I started to understand what the Gospel is.

Over 2,000 years ago, the Word, Jesus Christ became flesh. He was born of a virgin, lived a life without sin and He sacrificed Himself in my place. When Jesus was on the cross, He was paying the penalty for my sin. If the wages of sin is death and I have broken His law, then I deserve those wages, but instead, Jesus paid my fine in His blood. You see on that cross, an actual legal transaction took place. His righteousness was credited to my account so that God can now legally dismiss my case. He took my punishment so that I could stand justified before God. That's the good news of the Gospel, that's what I'm putting my faith in.

Can we all say "amen" to that? Wasn't that good. See, he said the same thing God says about salvation, didn't he? Now, he put it in his own words, he said it in his own terms, but it came out of his heart. He said, "I couldn't live up to God's law. I wasn't better than anyone else." He said, "Jesus was my righteousness, Jesus took my punishment on Himself." That's a correct confession. That's what it means to confess with your mouth. You give God all the glory, God all the credit, God, God, God, God, Christ, Christ, Christ. He deserves the glory, He saves me, all I did was sin. That's how you get into the church, by boasting in Christ, by bragging in Christ, not by boasting in yourself.

That's what we're looking for here at Grace Fellowship. We're not looking for you to recite the London Baptist Confession. If you can do that, that's fine, I'd love to hear it in the original English of 16 something. We're not looking for a summary of Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology or how many Bible verses you've memorized. We just want to know that you're a

Christian. We just want to hear you talk about Jesus Christ. Every testimony is a theology lesson, isn't it? This is what God did for me in Christ. And that's what we're looking at. And next week we'll get into this, but we're gonna ask you to write out your testimony on the membership application. And we'll ask questions like tell us how you became a Christian, or how would you share the Gospel with someone? Not to embarrass you or to put you on the spot, we just want to hear you tell us about Christ. We just want to hear you tell us the same things God says about salvation.

And this leads to a second condition for a correct confession. We'll try to go through the other ones maybe a little quicker, you must submit. Not only must you confess and say the same thing God does to be safe, you must submit. You must bow the knee to Jesus Christ. That's what Paul goes on to say in the next part of verse 9. He says, "that if you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord". To confess Jesus as Lord is to submit to Him. It's to bow your knee to Him.

We could translate the word "Lord" as the word "master", that's what the word means. When we pray "Lord Jesus", we could just as well pray "master Jesus", because that's who He is. That doesn't sound like such a big deal to us because we're used to talking this way, but in the first century, this was a life and death matter to a Jew. The word for Lord here is *Kyrios* which was used more than 6,000 times in the Greek Old Testament to refer to God. The word *Adonai*, the word *Yahweh* was this one word: *Kyrios*, which was used 6,000 times to refer to God.

So what Paul is saying here is that if you would be saved, you must confess Jesus as a God. If you remember your Old Testament, that's tantamount to blasphemy for a Jew. You would be killed for doing this. I've heard it said that the early church didn't have rosters of members. And maybe it did, maybe it did not, but what they did understand was if they considered you a Christian back then, you were probably on the run for your life. They would take you out behind the Synagogue and stone you for calling Jesus "Lord" in the first century. Or there are stories of Jewish families holding funerals for people who became Christians in their front yard. They would have a casket out there. They weren't dead yet, but they were dead to them. You'd be chased by the Roman Governor for calling Jesus "Lord" instead of Caesar. This was a big, big deal.

And the point is that salvation cost you something. Salvation cost you something. The story is told of a watchmaker who hired a young boy to work in his shop. And after some time, the boy came in one morning and said, "Sir, I stole this watch from you three years ago when I first started working here but I want to give it back." And he handed him this nice shiny watch. The watchmaker said, "Well, that's great, son, but why are you bringing it back now?" And the boy said, "Because I became a Christian last night and I would've brought it back to you last night, but I thought you were asleep." That is confessing Jesus as Lord. "This cost me something, it costs me everything. I don't live for myself anymore, I live for Him. I don't do what I want to do anymore, I do what He wants me to do. He's my Lord." That's the idea of the word. "If I read it in Scripture, that's what I'm gonna do, period."

And to give you a negative example of this, I got to say just before my senior year of high school, one of my closest friends had a hard time with it 'cause I stopped sinning with him. I stopped drinking with him, I stopped cussing with him, I stopped watching bad movies. Later

that same year, he shocked me when he came up to me after class and he said, "Jeremy, I want you to know I got baptized last night." This was on a Monday. He said, "I got baptized last night." And I was about to say that's great until he said these words, he said, "I just want you to know nothing is going to change. Nothing is gonna change." He said, "I'm gonna keep drinking, I'm gonna keep cussing, and I'm gonna keep watching whatever I want to watch." Friends, my friend didn't get baptized, he got wet. He didn't get saved, he just got religious for a day. That's not the way salvation works. Salvation changes you. If nothing changed in you, nothing happened, if you are the same person you were before you met Jesus, then you didn't meet Jesus, you met someone else. Jesus makes a difference in your life. Jesus turns the whole thing upside down.

And this doesn't mean you have to clean yourself up before you become a Christian, you can't do that. The only way to come is dirty. The only way to come is just as you are. And this doesn't mean you have to be perfect. It just means you have to repent. I've heard it said, Christians sin, but the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian, is that a Christian runs from sin, not to it. Was there a point in your life when by the grace of God you started running from sin? And if there was, that needs to go into your confession. You do it in your own words again. It doesn't have to be elaborate, it doesn't have to be scholarly, it just has to be in there somewhere. Listen, I was all these things, and then I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and now I'm all these things here. Spell that out.

On the membership application which you'll see next week, one of the statements is, describe your life before and after salvation, because this is what we want to know. What was it like before and after? Because if it was the same, if you were a nice church-going person before, and you're a nice church-going person afterwards, but there was no change of the heart in there, well, we've got some serious questions. There needs to be a time when you confessed Jesus as "Lord, Master, Ruler, the One who changes me". Listen, if you were a nice church-going person before (I was that way as a young person) a nice church-going person afterwards, that's okay, but tell us the change on the inside, right? Tell us what the Lord did in your life.

That leads to another condition Paul gives us. For a correct confession, you must confess, you must submit, third, you must believe. These are not in any order, by the way, this is just the way Paul presents them. But I think it's safe to say, you can't do all these other things if you don't believe. If you read all of verse 9, the Apostle goes on and says, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." I would say that "believe" is simultaneous with "repent". They go together, which is not a chronological order here. I think we could also say the word "believe" is falling on hard times today, when most people say, "I believe something," they mean, "I wish," or "I want it to be so," "I believe I'll be the next president of the United States." Right? Or, "I believe I'm a great hockey player even though I can't skate, and I'm five-foot eight and ... " They're all tall, right? No, they're not? Are they tall? I don't know. A lot of people mean that "I believe I can fly." A Sunday school teacher once asked her class, what is faith? To which a little boy answered, "Faith is believing something you know isn't true." A lot of people think that way, don't they? That's why you're laughing. They think to believe something means to believe a lie. Paul has something greater in mind when he talks about believing here. To believe in something, in Paul's mind, is to acknowledge it to be true, not to make it true, but to acknowledge it to be true. To affirm it. For

instance, I've never seen the wind, but I affirm the wind. I believe in it. Why? Because I can see the effects of it, I see it blowing, I hear it rustling through the leaves. It has proof of its existence. I acknowledge it based on truth. Same thing goes for my car engine. I don't know how my car engine works. I've never seen it operate from the inside out. I've never crawled in there and unscrewed everything. By the way, they say when you turn your car on, it creates eight different explosions simultaneously in the engine. Do you know how much faith you took to drive to church today? You drove to church with eight different explosions occurring right in front of your face. But you did it because you believe it to be true, right? It's never blown up on you. You've never turned your car on and pow! It's the same way with salvation. It's the same way with Jesus Christ, I've never seen Jesus Christ, not with my naked eye, not in the flesh. I never saw Him die on the cross. I never saw Him do a miracle, not walk on water or feed the 5,000. I never saw the virgin birth, never saw the resurrection, or any of that. But I see the effects of those things. I see proof of the way it's changed me, the way it's changed you. And that's what the Bible means when it uses the word "believe". A Francis Schaeffer in his book "He Is There and He Is Not Silent" has a good thought on this that's worth quoting to you. It's kind of long, but listen to this, I think it's helpful. He said,

One must analyse the word "faith" and see it can mean two completely different things. Suppose we were climbing in the Alps (Schaeffer lived among the Alps) and are very high on a bare rock, and suddenly, the fog shuts down. The guide turns to us and says that the ice is forming and there's no hope. Before morning, we will all freeze to death here on the shoulder of this mountain. Simply to keep warm, the guide keeps us moving in the dense fog, further out on the shoulder, until none of us have any idea where we are. After an hour or so, someone says to the guide, "Suppose I drop and hit a ledge ten feet down in the fog. What would happen then?" The guide would say that "You might make it until morning and live, but without any knowledge or any reason to support your action, you could die." So one of the group hangs and drops into the fog.

Schaeffer says that is one kind of faith, a leap of faith. And he goes on. He says,

Suppose, however, after we've walked out on the shoulder in the midst of the fog and the growing ice on the rock, we had stopped and heard a voice which said, "You cannot see me, but I know exactly where you are from your voices. I'm on another ridge. I've lived on these mountains, man and boy, for over 60 years, and I know every foot of them. I assure you that 10 feet below you is a ledge. If you hang and drop, you can make it through the night, and I will get you in the morning." I would not hang and drop at once, but I would ask some questions to try to ascertain if the man knew what he was talking about. In the Alps, for example, I would ask him his name. If the name was a name of a family from that part of the mountains, it would count a great deal to me. In my desperate situation, even though time would be running out, I would ask him what to me would be the sufficient questions. And when I became convinced of his answers, then I would hang and drop. This is faith, but obviously, it has no relationship to the other use of the word. As a matter of fact, if one of these is called faith, the other one should be called something else.

That's kind of long. But do you see what he's saying? There's two different ways to look at this issue of faith. Biblical faith is not a leap into nowhere. It's a leap into something real, something solid. And you have to confess that to be saved.

To say it another way, your confession has to make sense. I think some people think, "As long as I say something sincere and heartfelt, and I say it with a tear in my eye, that's enough." That's not the way it works, friend. You can't just make things up. You can't repeat a bunch of cliché phrases and never explain what they mean. You have to confess Biblical truth. I remember talking to a family member years ago about why he became a Christian, and he said, "God put it in here," and he pointed to his chest. So I said, "Whoa ..." No, no, he didn't say God. He just said, "He put it in here." He pointed to his chest. So I said, "Well, who put it in where?" And he didn't know. He just kept pointing to his chest, and he said, "He put it in here. He put it in here." Friends, that is not a correct confession. That doesn't even make sense. Do you understand Mormons talk about a burning in the bosom? Other religions talk like that. To make a correct confession, you have to confess truth. You have to show that you believe what God teaches is true, that He is holy and that you are not holy and then He gave His Son to die for your sins. You have to confess the truth in your own words. I'm gonna give you a chance to do that on the membership application like we're talking about.

And this leads to another condition you need to meet. (This is the last one.) In order to have a correct confession, you need to be hopeful. Paul goes on to explain what this leads to in verses 10 through 11, and he explains that this leads to hope. You look in verse 10, it says, "For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness. And with the mouth, he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, 'For whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.'" In Paul's day, the "heart" referred to "the inner part of you", to your "inner man", if you will. The Hebrew word for "heart" actually means "guts." So we say, "I love you with all my heart." They say, "I love you with my guts." So try saying that to your wife on her birthday and see how that goes. But the idea is the middle of you, right? The middle's not your heart. Your heart's up here. The middle of you is your guts. That's where your soul is, they thought, and Paul says, "If you believe with your soul, if you believe with your guts, you will be righteous in God's eyes, and you will be saved."

And as a result, verse 11 says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." The idea there is that a Biblical confession is hopeful. It is positive. After all, if you're safe from the wrath of God and raised to a new life in Christ, what do you have to worry about? What do you have to be afraid of? The word "disappointed" here, some of your translations say "put to shame," "ashamed." The idea's "embarrassed". Whoever believes in Jesus will never be embarrassed. They won't be hung out to dry. And we need to confess like that. You don't say, "Well, I don't know, maybe I'm in, maybe I'm not", "Maybe I'm going to heaven, maybe I'm not." You know what you call someone who thinks like that? You call them a legalist, because they're trusting in their works, "Maybe I was good enough today, maybe I wasn't", "Maybe I did enough today, maybe I didn't", that's legalistic talk, that's legalism. Christians don't talk like that. We don't think like that. We say "Christ is enough, period," "Christ did enough, period. Yeah, I've got my good days, and my bad days. There are times when I wonder how God would save a wretch like me, but my faith is in God, not in the wretch," amen? "My faith is in Him, not in myself," that is our testimony. We have hope, 'cause it's not about us. The missionary Adoniram Judson said, "The

future is as bright as the promises of God." He said that while he was suffering in a Burmese prison that was so bad, that at night, they would hang the prisoners upside down to keep them from escaping. And as he was hanging upside down, the prisoner next to him said, "Pastor Judson, where is your God now?" And Judson said while he was hanging upside down, "The future is as bright as the promises of God." To give another story, a junior baseball player was sitting in the dugout, when someone asked him what the score was, and he said "It's 18 to nothing and we're behind." And they said, "Are you discouraged?" And he said, "How can I be discouraged? We haven't even gotten to bat yet." We haven't even gotten to hit yet. My friends, how can you be discouraged? You haven't even gotten to bat yet. You haven't even seen your reward yet. You haven't even seen heaven. And so Paul is saying, you have something to look forward to. You have a brighter day coming. There's a light at the end of the tunnel, and you want to shout that from the mountains. Put that in your testimony. Tell us, in your confession, that your faith is in God, and not in yourself. And therefore, you have hope.

So who can join the church? Well, Christians. Believers can join the church. And how can you tell if someone is a Christian? They'll make a correct confession, and in doing so, they're gonna say the same thing about salvation that God does, they will submit to His rule over their lives, they'll believe in His Son, and they will be hopeful. They'll approach the throne of grace with confidence. I've heard it said "Not brazenness, not boastfulness, but they'll approach the throne of grace with confidence." And next week, we're gonna look at what a member is, and what a member does, and we're gonna go through the membership process together.

We'll kind of close this series out, so if you're wondering what all this is leading to, come back next week and we'll talk about that, but for this week, let's tie it off with this. Earlier in the book of Romans, Paul said, "We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." I mentioned that to you several times. We've all broken His law, all failed to keep the commandments, but I want you to notice what Paul says in verses 12 through 13 of Romans 10. With that in your minds, he says, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him. For 'Whoever will call the name of the Lord, will be saved.'" Paul says, "For all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God, but whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." What that means is that all can join the church. All those who call upon His name can become a member of Grace Fellowship Church. As we're going through all this, this morning, I hope I didn't discourage you. That was not my intention. I hope you don't think you have to go out and get a PhD in theology before joining our church, because you don't. You just need to get Christ. You just need to get saved, or be saved, and tell us about it. You just need to say the same things Christ does. Friends, we're not looking for angels, we're looking for Christians, and what that means is that the door is wide open for you, friend. There will always be room in God's house for one more, and if you want to know how to join us, come back next week and we'll talk about that. But for now, let's close in a word of prayer and thank the Lord for the common salvation we have and where it leads to in the life of our church.

Father, we do thank you, Lord, for Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for how all can be saved in His name, Jew and Gentile, whoever they may be. Lord, I pray for those who are here this morning. I know that many of our church family is rejoicing in their salvation, and they're thinking about the times that You rescued them from darkness into light. And Lord, I pray, as we

start this membership process, it would just be a time of refreshment and encouragement for them. Father, for those who have never trusted in Christ, I pray that this time, this morning will be a time of conviction for their hearts. You would draw them to the Saviour who is there to take them home. Lord I pray that they would know, as many steps as they've taken away from You, it's just one step to Christ. May they leave this morning with that on their minds. Father, may You be glorified in Your time today, we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.