

(PP1) Romans 10:5-15

“Bible Bangers”

If you have tried typing on the tiny keypad on your smart phone, you know that it's pretty easy to make a mistake, especially if God has blessed you with extra large fingers! Phone manufacturers know this too, which is why they developed the helpful feature called “auto-correct.” Auto-correct is supposed to correct your terrible typing into a discernible message for your friend, co-worker or loved one.

Problem is that while auto-correct can read your typing, it can't read your mind; and the results are often disturbingly hilarious. Let me share some examples:

Mom reacting to picture of daughter: “You look affordable.” She meant, of course, “You look adorable” but, then again, maybe the kid shopped at a thrift store.

Mom to son: “Where are you?” Son: “I'm having little seizures.” Mom: “Oh no! I'm calling 911 for you right now!” Son: “No, mom! I meant I'm having Little Caesar's – I'm eating pizza!”

Susie: “Hold on a minute, I think there are some Bible badgers at the door.” Jane: “Bible badgers? I'll bet they're tenacious.” Susie: “No, Bible *bangers*. But, actually, badgers may not be far off.”

Guy to Friend: “How was the date?” Friend: “Awesome! I killed her at the end.” Guy: “That bad, eh?” Friend: “No, I meant I kissed her. Stupid auto-correct!”

You get the idea. One auto-corrected word can mean the difference between a great night out, or spending the rest of your life in prison!

Sometimes, us “Bible badgers” can get the words wrong, too, especially when we’re looking at Scripture. The apostle Paul is writing to a Roman church that is struggling with a conflict between Jewish Christians, who recently returned to Rome after being expelled by the emperor, Claudius, and the Gentile converts who likely made up most of the group in the small house churches that dotted the city.

(PP2) Paul is trying to help them get their terms right, *since both groups tend to “auto-correct” their language and understanding* back to what they knew before they became followers of Jesus. Throughout his letter to the Romans, Paul has been inviting both groups to take on a common vocabulary. For example:

In Romans 1-3, Paul reminds them that everyone, both Jew and Gentile, are under a slavery that is way more insidious than your cell phone contract. He reminds them, “All have sinned and fall short of God’s glorious standard.” (3:23)

In chapter 4, Paul reveals God’s solution to the problem through God’s covenant with Abraham, who placed his faith in God and became the father of the nation of Israel. God was going to bless this new and special people so that they, in turn, would be a blessing to the world, drawing all the nations to God. Through Moses, God gave Israel the law as a way of marking them as a called out, and set apart, people.

However, Israel struggled with the law, and Romans 5-8 reveals that the law itself wasn’t the ultimate solution to the world’s problems. In fact, the law only pointed out what sin was, and not really how to get out from under it. Paul’s point is that focusing on the law will only keep you focused on sin itself. The law itself won’t save us; only faith in Christ – the One who came from Abraham’s family, and was faithful to God in a way that Israel could not be – can do that.

Up to this point, what Paul has been doing is mapping out the common language and community that was now possible for both Jews and Gentiles to share because of what God has done in Jesus. Paul was helping to define the language of faith. Whereas the Jews once focused on the law, and the Gentiles once focused on philosophy and social status, now their common focus was on Christ.

This brings us to chapter 10 and Paul's desire that those who are stuck in the old language of law, his fellow Israelites, might still be saved. In verses 3 and 4 Paul says, "They don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. But Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God."

For Paul, "righteousness" is another way of talking *about God's covenant faithfulness*, or God's following through on His plan to rescue the world, which was announced to Abraham. Christ was the climax of that plan, and now God's covenant faithfulness not only extends to the Jews, but to all who believe and have faith in Christ.

(PP3) The problem is, however, that when many people want to type "faith," they actually mean "law," and vice versa. Paul defines these terms distinctly in verses 5-8. Moses defined the "righteousness that comes from keeping the law" as the things that one does – namely, adherence to the commandments.

Paul never denies that obedience is something that God requires from us (1:5), but outward obedience to a set of rules is not the primary way we become the people of God. That requires the "righteousness of faith," or putting our complete trust in God, and patterning our lives after his Son,

our Savior, Jesus (v. 5). Faith recognizes that God has come to us in Christ, who descended from heaven and was raised from the dead.

In short, God doesn't require us to be Bible badgers, or Bible bangers, for that matter. Our faith is not expressed by cracking people over the head with a Study Bible, and reminding them of the rules they are not following. Nor is it about focusing on the rules as the primary way we make ourselves acceptable to God. That's "auto-correction" of the worst sort.

"Auto" means "self," and if the only correction we get is by depending on our own self-righteous adherence to a set of laws, our lives are going to look way sillier than a messed up text message. (PP4) Instead, Paul says, we are to focus on a faith defined as giving our whole allegiance to Christ. That kind of faith is expressed in two ways:

First, we "**Confess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord.**" This is what a person does at baptism, or confirmation. But this confession is not just dogmatic agreement to a set of principles about Jesus. Instead, we confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*.

The implications of that confession would have been startling to those Roman Christians. For them to say that Jesus is Lord means that Caesar is not Lord, and to say that, meant they were committing treason against the empire (which was, in fact, the charge that sent many of them to their deaths).

Confessing Jesus as Lord meant then, as it means now, that we are giving our allegiance to a new world order, with Christ as the ruler of all. To affirm that Jesus is Lord, we commit treason against the powers of this world, and acknowledge that we have no power of our own. To speak of Jesus as Lord is to say that we are his subjects, and that we will

order our lives according to his lordship. Have you ever thought about your “faith” in this way?

Second, we “**Believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.**” Death is the curse that results from human sin. The law told us what sin was and reminded us of its consequences. Jesus, however, has reversed that curse. In Jesus, God has defeated death, and those who believe in him with their whole hearts will share in his resurrection. And, because death has been ultimately defeated for us, that means that we can live as people who are free from fear. “Salvation” isn’t just some future hope, it is a present reality! How do you like that?!

(PP5) Faith, in other words, is not a set of rules, it is a way of life. Paul doesn’t want us to be auto-corrected; he calls us to be Christ-corrected. “No one who believes in [Jesus] will be put to shame” Paul says in verse 11. It doesn’t matter if you’re a Jew or a Gentile, or if you’re affordable or adorable. When you are in Christ, you will always be made right!

But, it’s not just about getting ourselves Christ-corrected either. It is also about sharing Christ with the rest of the world, who many times, have been receiving the wrong message. Paul asks, “But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?”

Sharing and living out faith in Christ are the ways in which God uses us to bring his Christ-correcting grace into the world. It’s not about badgering people into it, but about sharing the grace and love of Christ. Through faith in Jesus, we have freedom from sin and death, and the promise of eternal life with God. Someone shared that truth with you so you could believe. Isn’t sharing this good news with someone else the least you can do for your Savior? **May God bless you all, Amen.**

Sermon Notes

Romans 10:5-15

“Bible Bangers”

- If you have tried typing on the tiny keypad on your smart phone, you know that it's pretty easy to make a mistake. Auto-correct is supposed to correct your terrible typing into a discernible message for your friend, co-worker or loved one. Problem is that while auto-correct can read your typing, it can't read your mind; and the results are often disturbingly hilarious.
- In the Book of Romans, Paul is trying to help Jewish and Gentile believers to get their terms right, *since both groups tend to “auto-correct” their language and understanding* back to what they knew before they became followers of Jesus. Throughout his letter to the Romans, Paul has been inviting both groups to take on a common vocabulary.
- In Romans 10, Paul says, “People don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. But Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.”
- Outward obedience to a set of rules is not the primary way we become the people of God. That requires the “righteousness of faith,” or putting our complete trust in God, and patterning our lives after his Son, our Savior, Jesus (v. 5). Faith recognizes that God has come to us in Christ, who descended from heaven and was raised from the dead.
- Paul says, we are to focus on a faith defined as giving our whole allegiance to Christ, and that faith is expressed in two ways: First, we **“Confess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord.”** Second, we **“Believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.”**
- Faith, in other words, is not a set of rules, it is a way of life. Sharing and living out faith in Christ are the ways in which God uses us to bring his Christ-correcting grace into the world. Isn't sharing this good news with someone else the least you can do for your Savior? *May God bless you!*

Call to Worship

Leader: As we gather for worship, so let us gather ourselves.

People: As we greet our neighbor, so let us greet God.

Leader: As we shake hands with a stranger, let them be a stranger no more.

People: As we speak openly with a friend, so let us talk openly to God.

Leader: The candles are lit, so let our hearts be lit by the warmth of God's love.

**All: We gather together to praise God and offer our thanksgiving for the blessings of God.
Alleluia! Amen!**

Prayer

How easy it is for us to see others in terms of black and white and allow ourselves shades of grey. How quickly we judge others by what they fail to do and how quick we are to give excuses for our actions. How easy it is for us to look askance at how someone is spending their money and how fast we are to make allowances for our own spending habits.

How readily we hold others to the rules and how quick we are to allow ourselves to bend the rules to justify our actions. We are so eager to hold everyone accountable to the letter of the law and to give ourselves a measure of grace.

Forgive us, O God, for playing you. In these moments of stillness, release us from the harshness of our ways and fill us with the love of Christ that we might extend the gift of grace which has been so graciously given to us. Amen.

Hymns

Come, Thou Almighty King

God of Grace and God of Glory

Come, Christians, Join to Sing