God’s Gift of Salvation
Romans 9: 8-13

If you were here for the second Sunday of Christmas, you will recall that I preached from John 1 and God’s Gift to Mankind, The Word became Flesh.

Today we celebrate the first Sunday of Lent. I encourage you to let this season be a time of personal reflection as we prepare to ponder Christ’s suffering on the Cross and the marvel of the resurrection.

As we go through Lent, we will look at God’s gifts to us in a different light. Today we examine God’s gift of Salvation. In coming weeks, my fellow chaplains will proclaim the wonders of God’s gift of heavenly citizenship, of victory, of a new vocation and finally of the gift of Christ himself.

As I read our text today from Romans 9, a text that I have had memorized for many years, I pondered and prayed about the best way to present the gift of salvation.

Paul provides in clear detail how to be saved:
- Confess with your mouth that Christ is Lord.
- Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.

Further he explains these dual elements, is it with your heart that you believe and are justified and with your mouth you profess and are saved.

These brief and succinct statements follow a treatise by Paul in prior chapters of the sinful nature of man and the solution in Christ our Savior.

In Romans 1 we learn that creation itself points to God but in our sin we turn to our own depravity rather than God. Paul continued showing that we can try to work our way to God but will fail. We can try to keep the law but again fall short. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Later Paul showed the cost of sin: For the ways of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ our Lord.

Romans 8 is that wonderful chapter concluding, What can separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death nor life nor things present nor things to come.

But it all starts with a personal relationship. Before I can worry about being separated, I must be joined. I must deal with the misery and the price of sin.

Sin has created a chasm between us and God. A chasm that we cannot cross on our own.
So we return to Romans 10:9-13. I initially focused on the theology I discussed earlier from 9-10. 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.

Verse 9 includes past, present and future. If you believe - present, in the resurrection, past, you will be saved, future.

You would do well to reflect on these elements of salvation but for today, I want to focus on the last verse of our passage, vs. 13

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

This short phrase tells us so much about the wonder of the gift of salvation.

1. Everyone: No respecter of persons
   - Jew, Greek, Male, Female, Army, Navy
   - For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to those who call him.
   - For the original audience, that was an amazing statement. The God who gave the covenant to Israel is expanding his covenant to all will call upon his name.

But think about our society. Even if we have made great strides in breaking down racial barriers we are a society that has unequal access and in some cases for understandable reasons. In our military structure, I couldn’t walk into the Superintendent's office without good reason (which I wouldn’t have as a LCDR) and without following proper protocols and procedures. There are no procedures that would give me access to the President. And yet, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” The same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to those who call him.

   • The gift of salvation grants everyone access to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

But with this amazing gift, there is action required on our part.

2. Who Calls: Perhaps you recall my illustration at Christmas of the unopened, forgotten gift. The gift that did not fill it’s destiny because it was unwelcomed by the recipient, left to be found as the tree was put away. God’s gift of salvation requires that those who accept call upon the name of the Lord.

   • This seems like an easy thing and yet many will refuse to do it. In John 3 Jesus said as Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. After the people of Israel complained that God had brought them out of Egypt to die so the Lord sent fiery serpents. Then he had Moses make a serpent and place it upon a pole. The people had to look at the pole in order to be saved. It was faith, not an
inanimate object that saved the people. Likewise, we must take action and call upon the Lord in faith.

- Some may not call because of lack of faith. Some may not call because of stubbornness. Some may refuse to call because of anger or bitterness falsely directed to God. Perhaps one of the most egregious is the excuse that God will save all if he is truly loving and that action shouldn’t be required. God’s gift of salvation is Him reaching to man, and our response should be to call upon his name.

Which brings me to the third aspect of this simple verse.

3. Name of the Lord
Specific God - The God of Israel. This verse as a whole would harken back to Joel 2:32 “And it shall come about that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” First, in Joel, the word for Lord was the proper name of God, YHWH. More so, by quoting Joel, Paul is directly tying salvation through Jesus Christ to the God of Israel, the Lord of the Covenant. The God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We can place our faith in many things, some well-placed and some misplaced. But our faith for salvation can only rest in one place, in Jehovah God.

Proverbs 18:10 The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are safe. Think about the times you are in trouble. Do you not call upon the name of the one whom you most trust to help?

Heather tells the story of how happy she was to first hear the name Mommy from her little girl but then one day jokingly regret it because everything was mommy, mommy, mommy. Why do they do it. Because they know Mommy loves them and has their best interest at heart. Isn’t it a privilege to be called for in need, even if sometimes a child needs to learn to act independently first. Just as a child can call upon their mom or dad, so Everyone can call upon the name of the Lord. We worship a personal God. He knows your name and my name and not only can we call upon his Name, but it’s the desire of his heart.

One of the saddest verses of scripture to me is Matthew 23:37, mirrored in Luke 13:34. O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her. how often I wanted to gather your children together like a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it. Jesus knows that the cross that is before him in a matter of weeks. And he laments that his desire is to gather and protect his children if they will only call upon him.

In a chapter full of woes, His desire is not to condemn, but to save.

**Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.**
4. **Shall be Saved: God’s action**

   - His gift. It’s God reaching down from heaven, and sending his son. It’s God the father mourning his son. It’s Jesus the Son, laying down his life as a perfect sacrifice. It’s the Lamb of God washing away the sins of the world. That which we could not do for ourselves, God did for us.
   - Colossians 1:13 “For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and has transferred us to the Kingdom of his son.”

   - South Pacific, specifically the Philippine Sea. Shortly after midnight on July 31, 1945 USS Indianapolis traveling under radio silence is torpedoed by a Japanese sub. Within 12 minutes the ship slipped beneath the ocean. Of 1,119 men on board, approximately 900 made it off the ship and into the water, perhaps because many routinely slept topside due to fear of being caught asleep in the decks below during a night submarine attack. Unfortunately, few life rafts made it into the water and most survived with life jackets or life belts. Because they were traveling in radio silence no one knew the ship was attacked, they would not be missed until they failed to arrive in port on time. Due to communication errors, they were not missed even when they failed to arrive on time. Four days passed until they were spotted by a plane and subsequently rescued. Of the approximately 900 who made it into the water, only 316 men were rescued.
   - Why do I share such a sad story apart from the fact that we never forget our Naval heritage? These Sailors were in a position where they could not help themselves. They had no food, no water worthy of drinking, and worse no way to call for help. How foolish it would have been for the 316 to not accept help when it arrived four days later.

In the U.S. today, we have heard the word saved or salvation so often that perhaps it’s lost it’s meaning. Colossians 1:13, For He has Rescued Us from the Dominion of Darkness.” Reword Romans 9:13 Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be rescued!

From what? From death, hell, and the grave. So where do we go from here?

1. Have you personally called upon the name of the Lord for salvation? If not, why not today? Following the service ask to speak to one of the chaplains and we would be glad to answer questions and to pray with you.

2. If you have called upon the name of the Lord:
   a. Take time to thank God for his amazing gift.
   b. Take time to pray for friends and family who have not accepted his gift.
   c. Always be prepared to share a testimony for the hope that is within you.

Amen.