

****Bumper Video –**

Twisted Title

Welcome to Redemption Church and the 4th and final week of our Sermon Series Twisted: Scripture Misused. My name is Chris Fluitt, I serve as lead pastor here at Redemption Church. HAVE YOU ENJOYED THE SERIES? We have not shied away from controversy. We dove into the subject of predestination in the first 2 weeks as we looked at Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 9. Last week my wife spoke on the highly flammable subject of Women in ministry. Didn't she do a great job? Someone approached me after last week's service and told me that scriptures twisted against women were one of the main reasons they had at one time embraced atheism.. after hearing Sarah last week they said it cleared up a lot of confusion. Isn't that great!? All glory to God! #AG2G

Twisted Scripture brings about confusion. It's important that we talk about any confusions we have in the Word of God. If you have questions about the Bible or perhaps a question about today's message, please **TEXT** our anonymous line 214 856 0550.

Today we are going to finish this series by looking at a well known scripture. This scripture is a valid scripture full of truth. As we have talked about twisted scripture, we have never meant to imply that the scripture was worthless... let's throw that one out... scratch that one out of your Bible... No! The Scripture is Powerful... ALL scripture is powerful!

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,(NIV)

The problem is not with the scripture! The problem has been in how people have used the scripture... interpreted the scripture. We must learn to "correctly handle the Word of Truth."

Today's scripture is like that. It is a very hope filled promise, but it has been twisted to mean something the original author never intended it to mean.

That is our working definition of **Twisted Scripture**

Get out your Bible and turn to **Romans 10:9**.

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.(NIV)

What is twisted about that?

Now I want to treat the scripture with great care. This scripture is often used to tell someone about salvation. **SALVATION IS AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT!** And the church said Amen!

You may be real nervous right now about where this is headed. Relax.. it's going to be ok. You may be saying "I don't see what the big deal is. All my life this is what church was. I believe. I confess. I'm saved." Indeed, it is what the Christian Church at large has looked like since the early 1900s.

So how is this twisted? Let me spell it out.

Every Spring Break there a group of Christian College students who will canvas the beaches for Christ. I admire their heart and zeal to do something for Christ. They go to beaches and start conversations with people about Jesus. They ask them if they know they are saved. If they aren't saved then they ask them if they believe Jesus is Lord... If they say yes to believing, then they are led to confess through the sinner's prayer. They then tell the beach goer that they are saved according to Romans 10:9 and leave them with an information card instructing them to find a Bible believing Church.

After the mass canvassing they collect numbers and broadcast those everywhere... We had 200, 600, 1000 salvations at Beach reach.

Romans 10:9 is often used in church services to invite someone to say something called the "sinner's prayer." It has also been called "making Jesus your personal savior" or as a "decision for Christ."

This scripture has been used in conjunction with the truth that God loves us, that we are all sinners who have fallen short of the Glory of God, and that God in His love and mercy sent His son Jesus to save us... what is this..? It is the Gospel message. The good news of Jesus Christ.

That Jesus Christ came, died upon the cross, was buried, and rose again 3 days later. It is the Gospel.

Romans 10:9 has been used as a response to the Gospel. Do this thing... believe... and then do this thing... confess...

In light of this knowledge of God's love and Jesus' sacrifice... will you believe and confess? Will you make a decision for Christ?

And if the Gospel presentation isn't enough to convince them to make a decision for Christ... then perhaps the news of Hell and an eternity of torture will convince them to believe. Tell them that it is REALLY important that they believe... or else...

In other parts of the world they will have crusade services where they do this same thing where the upwards of 30,000 people are saved.

It is wonderful that the Gospel of Christ is being shared. It is wonderful that people are active in sharing their faith. It is wonderful that people are boldly going into their world and praying with people and making Christ the center of that prayer. ...but there is a problem.

In this very numbers driven evangelism... there are some really bad numbers.

A 2011 George Barna study shows that nearly half of all adults in America have prayed a sinner's prayer, believing they are going to heaven, though the majority rarely, if ever, attend a church, read the Bible personally, or have lifestyles that differ in any significant way from those outside the church.

Right now about 80% of Americans claim to be Christian. When asked what makes them Christian they said overwhelmingly that it was A BELIEF IN JESUS that made them Christian. Then when asked to describe the change that being a Christian brought to their life, the majority said that little to no difference was made.

Of these mass salvations where they have 100s and 1000s being saved.. they have statistics where 5 years later 80-90% of them are no longer actively living out their faith. Their decision for Christ was for only a moment in time and they are no longer living that decision out.

Those that are scared into believing in Jesus and confessing... we don't have a greater hope for them either. It would seem that they would serve Jesus only as long as they were afraid.

We have a large segment believing that Jesus exists... believing that He is Lord... Believing the Bible... yet there is little to no action or change. Something has been twisted. Are we willing to say something is wrong with this scenario?

When people believe & confess in Jesus, but have no perceivable change in their life... something has been twisted.

This scripture has been twisted to tell people that all they have to do is believe and confess and that they are heaven bound.

Now this is exactly what the words of the scripture say. It seems as though it were written as a promise. "if you confess... declare with your mouth..." So shouldn't we believe it just as it is written.

Let's point out a Key to understanding scripture. **Look for the Connection**

It would be incorrect to treat 1 verse as a stand alone teaching or doctrine. Every verse, every subject, every teaching and doctrine in the Bible connects with verses, subjects, teachings, and doctrine elsewhere in the Bible.

1 verse does not stand alone. We are not to form a doctrine based on 1 passage. We must find the connection!

There is a group of people that read the Bible and came across 1 single verse that mentions "Baptism for the dead." 1 Corinthians 15:29.

There is no other scripture that even hints at this subject.. There is no other scripture that connects to this idea... yet this group this very day will baptize for the dead. They let this single scripture twist into an odd doctrine.

Look for the connection

- We need the verse to connect in agreement to other verses and to other authors. For instance not just the writings of Paul, but also Peter or James. We also should look for connection from different cultures and contexts.
- We need the verse to connect with the picture of God's character... The perfect picture... the only picture of God is Jesus. It needs to look like Jesus. It needs to connect with that picture.

- And lastly it must connect and agree with the overarching message of Scripture.
- IF THE WAY WE ARE INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE DOES NOT CONNECT, INSTEAD IT DISAGREES AND GOES IN BIZARE DIRECTIONS... THEN WE ARE INTERPRETING IN WRONGLY.

A singular unconnected scripture interpretation should never form a doctrine.

So if we have this doctrine that says “all you have to do to go heaven is believe and say this prayer.” We sure better find some connection in scripture.

The real problem with this interpretation of Romans 10:9 is a misunderstanding of God’s plan for us from the beginning. To this point we still haven’t understood what God was trying to do way back in Genesis 1!

Contract or Covenant

Has God formed a Contract with us or a Covenant? What is the difference?

We are very use to a contract. A contract is an agreement.. it is a legal deal between 2 parties. It is not based anything personal or relational between them. It is all business. It is about a this for that deal. (I did not form a relationship with the used car salesman. We don’t see each other every weekend and hangout. No. We signed the paper and gave him the money and drove off with the 1982 DeLorean with the Back to the Future soundtrack on full blast. WE DON’T SEE THE CARSALESMAN ANYMORE AFTER SIGNING THE CONTRACT). Contracts are not about relationship.

A covenant is also an agreement... A covenant however involves the lives of both individuals. It is deeply personal and completely built on the relationship.

Which one sounds like what God wants? A contract or a covenant?

A contract is about acquiring something from someone. In the contract, a price is negotiated for an exchange. It is completely self-centered on what I want and what is best for me.

A covenant is not all about receiving. A covenant GIVES... it gives promises and makes vows and pledges. Even self sacrificing promises. A covenant thinks about what the other people in the relationship need.

Does God want a contract or a covenant?

In a self-centered contract we are always seeking “best for less.” We are seeking to pay the least amount for the most we can get in return. The legal binding of the contract lets us know the bare minimum we can do... and then that is exactly what we do. And contracts have a time period and then they end.

A covenant gives more. A covenant gives the maximum. A covenant gives without an expiration date. As long as you are alive you are holding to the covenant... long after the contract has expired.

Does God want a contract from you today or a covenant?

A contract is built on mistrust. Since I don't trust your word, let's put this in writing. It is formed with the thought that you won't follow through on the deal so we need language in this contract that forces you to follow through. A contract is about protecting yourself and your self-interest.

A covenant protects the integrity of the relationship. The covenant is built on trust. You make pledges and promises that you can always trust me... I will always be available to you... More than what I will do in this agreement it is centered on who I will BE in this agreement. You can trust me because this covenant will consume every part of my being.

Contract or Covenant? What does God want?

If a contract is broken, then the deal is off. If you stopped making the payment then I will reposes the item of purchase.

A covenant continues to give even when the other party isn't giving equally or fully cooperating. We have evidence of God giving us a covenant that goes beyond condition. His love and care continued

after Adam & Eve stopped keeping their part of the covenant. God gives covenant to Abraham and His seed and continues long after they have forgotten their relationship with Him. God gives covenant to Moses in the form of 10 commandments.. and while he is giving it to Moses, the rest of the nation of Israel is at the bottom of the mountain breaking the covenant in idol worship to golden calf. Covenant continues even when people fall short in their commitment.

What do you think God wants from us today? A covenant right?

Romans 10:9 and other scriptures on salvation have been treated as contracts. A contract where we do the following, we believe and confess, and now God, the other business party in the contract, must provide goods and services of entrance into heaven. What a sweet deal!

Contracts are about acquiring.. Contracts aren't built on relationship... contracts are about receiving "best for less." These are all problems we see in the American Church today. They have approached God with contracts instead of covenant.

You cannot purchase your salvation with belief and a prayer. You cannot earn your salvation with baptism or holy living. You cannot find some loop hole in the Bible where you are guaranteed Heaven. This is a contract frame of mind.

In contracts you are always seeking the least you have to do. No one here has told their mortgage company... "guys ya'll have been such a good company.. We have decided to pay you more than what we decided on in the contract." NO WAY! We are paying what we agreed to and not a penny more. Don't ask us to pay more or ask us to pay sooner than what we agreed upon... we know our rights..

This is the spirit that some people approach Romans 10:9. I believed and said the sinner's prayer when I was 8 years old. I am saved. I can live however I want. Don't ask me to do anything more. I fulfilled the points of this contract.\

And so we have people who claim Christianity who never go to church, read the Bible, pray, or have any change in their life. They site the contract and say... we don't need to do that. This is a twist of Scripture.

Salvation is about covenant.. not contract. It is something we ENTER into and don't walk away from. Salvation is typified as a marriage. Marriage is a covenant... it is completely built on relationship, trust, love...

Saved, Saving, Will Save

Salvation is used in past, present, and future tenses in the Bible.

Ephesians 2:5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.(NIV)

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.(NIV)

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!(NIV)

God's salvation is Past, Present, & Future!

Only the past tense makes sense in the legal contract. So we often hear... "when were you saved? I was saved in 2004 at a youth camp."

So past tense makes sense in the contract view. "I did this and I received this..."

But all 3 tenses, past, present, & future only make sense in a covenant understanding.

I was lost but then I realized Jesus loved me. I believed, trusted & obeyed His Word and He saved me. PAST

I am still this very moment walking in this relationship with God. I am facing trouble.. I am still facing my faults and failures in sin, but His covenant with me is present and I am seeking Him and asking Him to forgive me and restore me. He is saving me from my sin right now. PRESENT

And I don't know what lies ahead of me, but I have learned that I can trust God's covenant to remain true. I know that God goes before me.. He makes my paths straight... He is leading me beside still waters

and through the valley of the shadow of death... whatever comes I will fear no evil. I know that God will save me. FUTURE

Are you thankful that God interacts with you through COVENANT and not CONTRACT? If it were contract then we would have no relationship and my hope would be based on my ability to keep the contract... YIKES! Romans 3:23 says that I have already broken contract. I have sinned and fallen short...

But because God has built this relationship on covenant... it is based on His love for me and my love for Him. His love is found in the past. His love is found in the present. His love is found in the future. AND EVEN WHEN I have completely fouled things up and not been true to the covenant... I turn around and find Him there waiting with arms stretched open.

GOD LOVES US! Not based on a legal contract but on a relationship. God took one look at you and fell in love! It is the greatest love story of all time.

We said earlier that Romans 10:9 is being treated as a response to the Gospel. Let's take a look at the Biblical response to the Gospel.

Then let's try to connect to other examples of people receiving Jesus. Let's start with His disciples...

Matthew 4:19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."(NIV)

Matthew 4:20 At once they left their nets and followed him.(NIV)

11 out of 12 followed Jesus through persecution, great loss, torture, and death. Does this connect with a teaching where you believe, confess, are saved, and never need any change in your life?

How about Acts 2 – the birth of the New Testament Church.

Acts 2:36 PETER SAID "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."(NIV)

Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"(NIV)

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.(NIV)

Acts 2:39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."(NIV)

So they repented! They were baptized! They were filled with Holy Spirit! AND IT DIDN'T STOP THERE! They continued...

Acts 2:46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,(NIV)

There are more examples of course... but let's stop here and declare that salvation is an unending covenant. It is not one moment in time where someone preached a good sermon and stirred your heart. It is a continued relationship with God.

Let's point out that Romans was written to those that have already come to believe, confess, and actively follow Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9 was not being delivered to people that were for the 1st time hearing the Gospel.

Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.(NIV)

Romans 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.(NIV)

Romans is written to Christians, people already following Christ. It is not written to people who have never heard the Gospel message.

SO WHAT IS ROMANS 10:9 saying?

The scripture is a reminder to those who had already believed and confessed. It was a reminder to them who already have an active, vibrant covenant relationship with God. This is where you started... not this is where you finished.

Romans 10:9 is also a generalization. These believed... but it wasn't just a mental exercise... they, as all other New Testament Gospel encounters show, had a belief that led to action.

James talks about faith.. a belief that is dead...

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.(NIV)

He is telling us that belief is accompanied by action.

And then there is this real head scratcher... James 2:19

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.(NIV)

So if belief will save you... then how shocking is it that James points out the Devil believes?

Sure the devils believe but they are not entered into a covenant relationship with God. It is not a belief that God exists that saves... it is the belief that leads to a covenant relationship with Him... a relationship lived out day by day... This saves!

Paul generalizes their confession. He doesn't seek to define a salvation experience... remember He is talking to people who already have believed, repented, been baptized, been filled with God's Spirit, having a covenant relationship with Jesus. Part of New Testament confession is to repent and be baptized... Worship, even communion is a public confession... I CAN BOLDLY SAY that in no way was Paul picturing a repeat after me prayer when he said confess.

There is no New or Old Testament example of the Sinner's prayer in Scripture. The formulaic prayer was invented in 1700's with something called the Mourner's Seat or Mourner's bench, where they would make sinners or nonbelievers sit in the front row of the church and would pressure them to change their ways. The Mourner's Seat went through some changes of the last centuries but became common only in the last century. Now churches have all the sinners come forward to say the prayer...

The apostle Paul wasn't thinking about this when he wrote Romans 10.

Music

We do 3 things every time we gather. We worship, we receive the Word, and we talk to God. We do not ask only people who have never received the Gospel to come and pray. We do not lead people through a repeat after me prayer and call them saved. We invite EVERYONE... to come talk to God.

If you have been in relationship with God for decades... we invite you to come and talk to the God who loves you. Continue that relationship.

If you have known God in the past but have been away from Him... we invite you to come and reconnect with Him. He is still wanting to have a relationship with you. He will forgive you of your sins if you will turn from them and confess them to Him. Come today!

If you have never known God. You might not even be sure that there is a God... we invite you to come today. There is not greater proof of God than coming to talk to Him and He talk back to you... that you feel His presence and care.

Everyone is free to come talk to God.

Come not seeking a contract... but a covenant.