Ship or Swim?

Romans 10:1-13

According to the Guinness Book of World Records the longest distance ever swum without flippers in the open sea is 139.8 miles. It was accomplished by a man named Veljko Rogosic from Croatia. The journey took him 50 hours and 10 minutes.

Along the same lines a man, from Malta, named Albert Rizzo in 1984 treaded water for 132 hours straight.

I bring these two examples up to consider the question, “On the ocean, could you last longer and go further in a boat or by swimming?”

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Seems like a simple answer, doesn’t it? I don’t think there is anyone out there who thinks they could better outlast the perils of the ocean without a boat. In fact, when I posed the question at home this week, one of my younger children immediately said, “duh.”

Being right with God is not unlike trying to stay afloat in the ocean. There was a reason that God had Noah build an Ark, it was because his arms and legs were not strong enough to keep his head above water. This is concept is what Paul is trying to teach his listeners and readers in Romans 10. There is a Way to be right with God, but it has nothing to do with how strong of a spiritual swimmer we are.

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Think about it. Whether you can tread water for 10 minutes or 132 hours, that is still a far-cry from treading water your whole life.

Remember the book of James says: “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”

We cannot be right with God by trying to do everything right, but thankfully God has provided the Vessel that insures our safe passage through life. Please follow along with me beginning with Romans 10:1.

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10 Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. 2 I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. 3 For 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.

I hope that everyone in this room understands this “no brainer” concept. No one can ever be right with God by obeying enough or being good enough. As Paul wrote to the Galatians:

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**10**But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God’s Book of the Law.” **11**So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.” **12**This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, “It is through obeying the law that a person has life.”

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This different WAY, is faith in Christ.

Faith in Christ gives life, even though we as believers still fail to get things right. What is your struggle against? What of kind of waters have you been trying to tread in?

Have you been struggling with anxiety?

Selfishness?

Anger?

Lust?

Gluttony?

Covetousness?

Laziness?

These are typical things that even the “best” people will battle.

And if you don’t have any of these struggles in your life, there is always the possibility of pride being an issue.

Thank God that Paul goes on to say in Romans 10:

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4 For 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.

5 For Moses writes that the law’s way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands.

This is right in line with Ephesians that says:

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**“14**For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. **15**He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. **16**Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.”

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Believing by Faith does not have any ethnic boundaries or distinction. The Jewish people had the benefits of the law and the Old Covenant which was supposed to lead them to Jesus. Instead, generally speaking, they were taking the long way around. In the book of Exodus, the people of Israel say that they will obey all of God’s commands (their problem was pride)…and yet, even before Moses get’s done hearing all of God’s commandments; the people have already started Idol worship.

After hearing the commandments they should have asked, “Is there any other way?”

Making a do or die deal that says you will obey God all the time is like committing to spend your life trying to stay afloat in the ocean. Thankfully, our life does not depend on our zeal for God or our obedience to His commands. It is dependent on His love for us and our faith in that love. As Paul goes on to write in Romans:

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6 But faith’s way of getting right with God says, “Don’t say in your heart, ‘Who will go up to heaven?’ (to bring Christ down to earth). 7 And don’t say, ‘Who will go down to the place of the dead?’ (to bring Christ back to life again).” 8 In fact, it says,

“The message is very close at hand;

 it is on your lips and in your heart.”

If this concept makes sense, it is because it is a “no duh” kind of principle. We all fall short, some can tread water longer than others, but all will eventually go under. Thankfully, just like in the days of Noah, God offers us a berth in an unsinkable battleship. Christ is our ship.

One internet author gives six reasons Christ is like Noah’s ark:

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Just as the ark was graciously provided by God for sinners, so salvation in Christ is provided by God for sinners. (Gen 6:8; Eph 2:8)

**Slide 10b**

Just as the ark was planned by God, so is salvation in Christ planned by God (Gen 6:14-15; Eph 1:4)

**Slide 10c**

Just as the ark was a place of safety, so is Christ a place of safety (Gen 6:17; John 10:7-10; Ps 23)

**Slide 10d**

Just as Noah and his family had to go into the ark for their safety, so must we go to Christ for our salvation (Gen 6:18; Heb 11:7; John 6:37)

**Slide 10e**

Just as the call to come into the ark was a limited-time offer, so is God’s call to come to His Son a limited-time offer (Gen 7:16; Is 55:6; 2 Pet 3)

**Slide 10f**

Just as the coming of the flood was unexpected, so the second coming of Christ is unexpected (Matt 24:26-44)

What do you think? Ship or Swim? If you want to be sure you are on board…Put your trust in Jesus. As Paul goes on to say in Romans 10:

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And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: 9 If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. 11 As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” 12 Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. 13 For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

There are two conceivably possible ways to eternal life. One way, is to obey all of God’s commands perfectly for a lifetime.

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 The other way is to gain life by trusting Jesus who lived a perfect life and fulfilled God’s righteous requirements for us.

This is the choice we have every day. Trust that Jesus has made us right with God and live. Or trust in our zealous works for our right standing with God.

When we look at the laws and commandments of God and we consider the righteousness of Jesus, attaining that on our own should seem as overwhelming as swimming from here to Hawaii. God’s commands are good, holy, and righteous, but once we have put our trust in Jesus our life does not depend on how well we keep His commands.

So why do we seek Him and make every effort to obey His New Covenant commands according to His Spirit?

Because of our gratitude toward Him and our relationships with other people. This is why the scriptures say:

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**14**For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Galatians 5:14

Having a spiritual water treading competition is not living. Loving your neighbor and living in the gracious safety that Jesus provides is living!

Jesus said:

“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life…”

Don’t trust in your strong swimming skills, get on board the true Ark of Salvation.

**Slide 14**

Today will you trust Jesus? He is like an unstoppable Battleship or destroyer who conquers all of our spiritual struggles.

Don’t try to swim. Take your sins and your failures to Him and rest in His forgiveness, His safety, and His life.