



“The Gospel’s Call”¹

Romans 10:14-21

This past week, I was meeting with a friend who has recently graduated from seminary with a Master’s of Divinity degree. He was telling me that one of his seminary professors taught that Christians should no longer evangelize because the world was reached in the 1st century. The apostle’s fulfilled their calling, but we as disciples don’t need to evangelize. We simply need to live with the Christians around us, encourage each other and love people in this world through bringing just systems into place.

As I was talking with my friend, I said, “How are there Christians if there’s no evangelism?” In other words, if people don’t speak the message of the gospel to each other, then no one will end up coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Good works are good, but they cannot bring someone to salvation. Of course, my friend agreed with me, but he also said he knows where this teacher came from. This teacher grew up in more conservative ultra-evangelistic circles where evangelism was highlighted almost at the expense of everything else. So, just evangelize. Just tell people they need to be saved, but who cares if they’re living in poverty, who cares if they have daily struggles to make ends meet. Who cares if they really believe, just get them to pray a sinner’s prayer.

I think maybe in some ways this teacher has reacted to an extreme against an easy-believism culture within churches. Churches, for decades, have focused on the individual need. Church becomes a place you go to merely for your own personal benefit instead of a community of believers who need each other. In addition, salvation is simply reciting words – whether you mean them or not. And so, we have fake Christians and a fake community of Christians.

I understand this concern. However, this teacher has pendulum swung to the other extreme. He’s thrown the baby out with the bathwater. Instead of saying, we need to care for people, especially their eternal welfare – thus evangelism and good works matter – he says “Only good works.”

My question is, “How loving is it to be nice to people and comfort them in this life, fluffing their pillows all the way to Hell?” Shouldn’t we show love in every avenue – spiritual and physical? Yet, I grow increasingly concerned within the church in America today. Even people who believe on Jesus, there are many who know they should be concerned for souls, but that concern does not overwhelm them. People are more scared of what people are going to think than they are about their position with God.

Paul wrote in Romans 9 that he has unceasing anguish for his fellow Jews. This motivated him in his mission towards the Jews, and it also motivated him in his mission towards the rest of the world. In Romans 9-11, Paul gives a defense for why he is evangelistic and how this evangelism actually fulfills

¹ This manuscript is still in the rough draft phase. I recommend you utilize these notes in conjunction to the sermon to gain greater insight and clarity.

God's promises to Jews and Gentiles. In chapter 9, Paul has shown that God saving few Jews and many Gentiles isn't against God's promises – from the beginning. As a matter of fact, it's in line with God's promises. Again, the reason Paul is emphasizing this is because if God doesn't keep his promises, then he's not a God who can be trusted. So, Paul moves into Romans 10, and in this chapter, Paul shows us how the Jews have stumbled over Jesus. They've turned away from Jesus because, to put it in modern vernacular, Jesus is too easy. Paul says we aren't to try to climb up to heaven or dig down to Hell. Jesus already experienced God's wrath and Jesus has ascended to Heaven in the place of sinners. Humanity's only hope is found in Jesus. Paul says that *everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

This is a phenomenal statement, but it's this kind of statement that calls people to an easy-believism. Just ask God to save you, and you'll be saved. Some of you may say, "What's wrong with that?" Well, in one sense, nothing. If you really want God to rescue you, he will! But so many have prayed a prayer with no genuine intentions. I've met many. They call out to Jesus for rescue from painful life circumstances. They call out to Jesus to rescue them from financial strain. They call out to Jesus to rescue them from addiction. They call out to Jesus to rescue them from Hell. What's the problem with these prayers? Well, many don't really want Jesus. They want the other stuff, and they want to use Jesus to get what they really want. That's the problem! They don't really want God. So, they don't call out to Jesus to give them what they most need – reconciliation with God.

Salvation takes place when God opens a person's heart and mind to understand that they are sinners against God, and the greatest problem is that they're at odds with the Creator and Savior. As a result, they're going to be punished. But Jesus took the punishment in the place of sinners. And so Paul shows in Romans 10 that those who call out to the Lord for this salvation are rescued. What's interesting is Paul emphasizes the heart and the mouth. He speaks of believing in the heart and confessing with the mouth. The point is that the entire being calls out for Jesus – and only Jesus. Get this – it's the entire being! Your heart desires and then your mouth agrees and cries out to the Lord. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. So, Paul says salvation isn't about building towers of morality to get yourself to Heaven. Salvation is found in Jesus alone. Will you believe and embrace Jesus with your entire being – trusting him? Or, will you continue this self-righteous pursuit?

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved! Run to Jesus. This news sounds too good to be true. But it's true! At this point, you could simply say, "Ok, everyone who calls will be saved. I'm glad I called. I hope others will." But Paul now moves into verses 14-21 of Romans 10, and we discover how this plays out. If we just live out life as Christians without proclaiming this to others, there will be no more Christians in this world. Evangelism is essential. So, before I say anything more, turn to Romans 10, let's pray together and then we will read verses 14-21. [Pray for Covenant Presbyterian and Ken Klett; Gerth Family; Dolores Kleinheksel.]

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." ¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a

nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”²¹ But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”²

As I review these verses, I think this main idea is that **Christians must call “everyone” to faith in Jesus, but not everyone will call on God.** The reason I have the quotation makes around “everyone” is because I don’t mean that you have to have a personal conversation with every single human being on this planet, but that you should desire and seek to share the good news to all different people throughout your life. When Paul says “everyone,” he’s showing the far reaches of the gospel’s call. God calls all men everywhere to turn to him. This is why I entitled the sermon *The Gospel’s Call*. The gospel summons people to respond personally to Jesus. But there’s another call the gospel gives to us. For those who trust Jesus, the gospel calls us to call others to trust Jesus. Let’s look further into this text to see this:

1. The gospel must be proclaimed and embraced (vv. 14-15).

Let’s read verses 14-15 again: ¹⁴How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”³

Verse 14 starts a new paragraph, but it’s connected with verse 13. Verse 13 says “everyone who calls,” and then Paul asks, “How will they call?” If the gospel can be embraced by anyone and God will save *every single person* who calls on Jesus, then how is this going to take place? I’m going to rephrase the questions to help us understand where Paul’s going with this? The first two questions focus on the gospel calling people to embrace Jesus.

Question #1: Can someone call on Jesus without believing on him?

The implied answer is “no.” And yet, even in our day, many people try to propose this. Some people will say that there are people in other countries and tribes who have never heard of Jesus, but even though they’ve never heard of him, they will believe on something that is like Jesus in disguise.

Other people, in our own culture, will try to make arguments that we don’t have to believe Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. We just need to believe concepts – concepts like a resurrection of the internal person or believing we can be good.

None of these types of responses are in line with Scripture. Salvation is being reconciled to God. Therefore, if you don’t know who Jesus is, you can’t be reconciled to him. Salvation is relational. How can you have a relationship if you don’t think relationship is necessary? How can you call on someone that you don’t even know? You can’t!

To add to this, the terminology Paul uses here is consistent with other authors in the New Testament. The idea of believing on Jesus isn’t simply saying, “Believe the facts.” It’s not enough to believe the facts

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 10:14–21.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 10:14–15.

about Jesus, but to believe on means that you take your trust entirely outside of yourself and you entrust your life, identity, hope, rescue in Jesus *alone*.

When we understand this, we get what Paul's saying. You're not going to cry out to Jesus if you don't first believe on him. But when you believe who is he and you trust him, then you will call out to him! Oh Ventura, we see a beautiful principle here. The first expression of belief is prayer. Like the first sign of new physical life is a baby crying, so it is spiritually, the first expression of new birth in Jesus is the breathing of prayer!

So, the only way people *will* call on the name of the Lord is if they embrace Jesus. This isn't easy-believism. This is genuine belief. But, by the way, in some people's efforts to de-emphasize a simple "pray a prayer," they also say, "So, don't call people to pray to Jesus!" That's incorrect. The Scriptures emphasize that if you believe, you will pray. I think it's entirely appropriate to ask people if they want to pray and call out to Jesus. If they genuinely believe, we can be with them when they take their first spiritual breath!

Paul now moves to the second question. **Question #2: Can someone believe without hearing?** Paul's hope is that people would believe on Jesus. Can we just assume that people are going to believe without any knowledge? No! So, how are people going to come to embrace Jesus and who he is? Paul emphasizes *hearing*. This hearing puts an emphasis on our responsibility.

You know, I've had many experiences after preaching where someone will say, "Wow! That message was phenomenal. It met me right where I was at, and I just want to say 'thank you!'" And then someone else will say something like, "I didn't get it at all!" Those are always encouraging days. But, there's a couple of walkaways I can get from that. First, I can always grow and work harder to better communicate to the various personalities and mentalities that are represented here. But, secondly, there is a spiritual aspect to preaching. The Bible tells us that the Word must be spiritually discerned, and the Spirit must open our minds and will to care about what is being spoken. Even if it's a struggle for us, we should pray the Spirit to open our minds and hearts to want to learn.

This is what Paul is emphasizing here. When he says "hearing," he's not simply saying that if someone is within earshot of the gospel, but doesn't take it in, they can believe. No! They need to *hear*. They need to pay attention. They need to know details about God and his salvation through Jesus. You cannot believe on Jesus and place your trust in him if you don't know him and know that he's worthy of your complete allegiance! So, Paul shows us in these first two questions that the gospel calls us to embrace Jesus. The next two questions show us that the gospel calls Christians to proclaim Jesus.

Question #3: Can someone hear without proclaiming? In the 17th and 18th centuries, there were many professing Christians who were anti-evangelism. One man who was experiencing increased conviction to evangelism was William Carey. He wanted to see people in India come to faith in Jesus, but people would say, "If God is going to save them, he doesn't need you." Are they right in that statement? Well, in one sense, yes. Does God *need* us in the sense that he depends on us? No. Romans 9 shows us that God is sovereign over all things. But, in God's sovereign power, he has planned to give his children the privilege to proclaim Jesus to others. And, God has ordained that if we don't proclaim, people won't come to faith in Jesus! So, through much difficulty, William Carey went.

Do you realize that if Christians don't share the gospel, people won't come to faith in Jesus? Therefore, each one of us have the call of the gospel on our lives to share the gospel with others.

The word “preach” here is actually the word referring to heralds. Think of the early 20th century with paper boys who would yell in the streets the news of the day: “Read all about it!” Well, in the 1st century, the phraseology is somewhat similar. Paul takes a Greek term like “gospel,” meaning good news and then he meshes it with a heralding term like that of a person announcing in the city streets. Put this together. Remember that “good news” referred to the news of a ruler conquering an enemy. And Paul has shown us in Romans that Jesus has conquered everything. The bad news is that we are born sinners, separated from God. Humans love God’s gifts more than God and they suppress the truth about God and embrace all sorts of lies. But Jesus, through his perfect life, his taking the punishment for sins and then rising from the dead, he has conquered sin and death. He has provided reconciliation with God and has made us united with him.

This is the good news. And since it’s news, who’s going to share it? Paul says we are! News must be proclaimed. News must be heralded. Oh, and by the way, this is an important point to remember. In our day, so many people say, “We need to live the gospel.” But that makes no sense. You can’t live the gospel. There’s only *one* who lived the gospel, and his name is Jesus. What we are called to do is herald the gospel and then in heralding the gospel, the gospel calls those around us to believe on Jesus! How are they to hear if there’s no one heralding? They won’t hear. So, we must proclaim!

In case you think, “Wait, why do you assume we have to proclaim,” let’s look at the final question in verse 15. **Question #4: Can someone proclaim without being sent?** What does this mean? Well, imagine that there are two people in the room talking about something secretive. You want to know so you put your ear against the door to listen in. You pick up on a few things they talk about, but it’s kind of hazy. Yet, you go to tell other people what was said. Then, the other person who was in the room comes out, hears the gossip and says, “That’s not what was said! I was there.” Who should you listen to? You should listen to the one who was given the information.

Paul goes on in verse 15 to say, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”⁴ This is a quotation from Isaiah 52:17, and there’s one modification of Paul here. Instead of it being in the singular, he’s put it in the plural. Some believe Paul is emphasizing that Jesus has fulfilled the this verse through his apostles proclaiming the good news – and while that is certainly part of it – I believe this verse extends to all who proclaim the good news. I think Paul’s teaching in Scripture is that those who believe are to proclaim because they are sent. Because the feet are beautiful who herald the good news! Jesus’ disciples move. They go! They are on mission for King Jesus. King Jesus conquered sin and death and wants to lay waste to the domain of Satan. As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we should have a passion to share this wondrous news to the world around us. And, as we do, people will come to faith in Jesus and be brought into Jesus’ Kingdom! Do you believe this mission? Do you, Christian, understand that you are called to this mission? I fear there are many in this room who would say they haven’t shared the gospel with someone in years. Do we really believe the message if we don’t declare it? If we don’t proclaim, people won’t hear. And if people don’t hear, they won’t embrace. The gospel calls us to call others to faith in Jesus!

But, there need to be a qualification on this. While these principles are true, this doesn’t mean that everyone who hears the gospel will believe. And, this takes us into Paul’s next point.

2. Proclamation does not guarantee faith (vv. 16-17).

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 10:15.

Read verses 16-17 with me again: ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ⁵

The “they” here could refer to only Jews or to Jews and Gentiles. I lean towards this being the Jews. Remember that Paul is speaking about how God has continued to fulfill his promises to Jews, even while many Gentiles are coming to faith in Jesus and only a few Jews are following Jesus.

Here in these verses, Paul makes it clear that the proclamation of the gospel doesn’t mean that everyone is going to listen and submit. In the ESV, we see Paul say “not all obeyed.” This word for obey can also be translated “accepted.” It’s important to recognize this. When Paul refers to the obedience of the gospel, he’s saying the only right response to the gospel is accepting and depending on Jesus. To cling to him. If your response to the gospel is, “I’m going to try harder for God’s acceptance” or, “There’s no point, I’ll just do my own thing,” you’re rejecting Jesus. The obedience to the gospel is entrusting yourself to the loving arms of Jesus and submitting to him as your Lord and Savior.

Paul says that not all respond this way. And then he quotes from Isaiah again. Isaiah asks this question because he’s saying that not many have believed the message. Many Jews actually rejected Isaiah’s message. Interestingly, Paul’s previous Isaiah quote and this one come from a similar section. This quotation is from Isaiah 53:1, the clearest passage revealing Jesus’ death and resurrection. And, before Isaiah prophesies Jesus’ sacrifice for sinners, he says, “Who has believed our report?” Paul now takes this to its fulfillment and says, “Who has believed the gospel message of Jesus?” Clearly, it was prophesied that many Jewish people wouldn’t believe. And, I think you can extend this to say that many Gentiles would disbelieve as well.

So, proclamation doesn’t guarantee someone exercising faith. But without proclamation, there will be no faith. That’s why Paul then brings in verse 17. So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. The word of Christ is the “good news.” Look at the end of verse 15 again. We preach the good news. Now, in verse 17, we proclaim the word of Christ. The word of Christ is the gospel. And, the gospel centers on who Jesus is and what Jesus has accomplished to rescue us from God’s just punishment and bring us into a gracious relationship with God.

So, the gospel calls us to call everyone to faith in Jesus (to proclaim the word of Christ), and while not everyone will call on Jesus, there will be people who will listen and embrace Jesus.

Practically, think about your life. Don’t say, “I’ve shared the gospel over and over again and no one accepts Jesus, so I’ll just give up.” It’s not your responsibility to save people. It’s your responsibility to proclaim – and to trust that God will draw people to himself even through the repeated proclamation of Jesus. And also, if people don’t come to faith in Jesus, we also recognize this is going to be the case.

Paul moves on to a third point by showing us the example of rejection of the gospel – while the gospel is still to be proclaimed to the Jews.

3. Many Jews have heard and rejected God’s grace (vv. 18-21).

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 10:16–17.

Let's read verses 18-21: ¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." ¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." ²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." ²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." ⁶

Our question then is "Why haven't more Jews come to faith in Jesus?" Have you ever asked a question like this? "Why did I trust Jesus and someone else didn't?" We can tend to think that salvation is merely a matter of logic that if someone just knew enough information then they would be saved, too. But, as we have learned over and over again in Romans, being sinners means that *none* of us would turn to Jesus for rescue if the Lord does not first come to us and give us new life. Again, Romans 8 says that the mind set on the flesh does not and cannot submit to God. It cannot!

But Paul is still going to engage the questions. The first one is, **Question #1: Have the Jews heard the gospel?** Paul quotes from Psalm 19: Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Interestingly, these words in the psalms refer to God's general revelation. How the creation itself points to the reality of God. So, is Paul simply saying that the Jews have general revelation and that's enough for them to trust Jesus? That can't be because Paul showed in Romans 1 that general revelation only goes so far. It doesn't teach us about Jesus. So, what is Paul doing here? Well, Psalm 18 moves on into speaking on the Word of God and its power. I think Paul is quoting Psalm 18 to say that just like the sun touches the whole earth; so the gospel reaches the whole world! Paul is not saying here that the gospel has reached everywhere in the globe, but that because of Jesus, it will. The messengers will take the message everywhere. And, from a Jewish perspective, the message has essentially reached wherever any Jew resided.

It's not for a lack of hearing that the Jews don't believe. The message has been proclaimed by people who were sent, and the Jews heard it. But they refuse to embrace.

Now we have the second question. **Question #2: Did Israel not understand the gospel's call to everyone?** In verse 19, Paul simply says, "Did Israel not understand?" Many can think that means, "Did Israel not understand the gospel?" But I don't think that's what Paul's getting at because his answers from Moses and Isaiah don't answer that question. Instead, both Moses and Isaiah speak of God saving a foolish nation and saving those who didn't ask for it.

So, I think Paul is saying, "Did Israel not understand the gospel's call to everyone?" This question relates to Israel's rejection of God. You might want to pay closer attention as I explain. First, Paul quotes from Moses. In Deuteronomy 32, God is declaring a punishment because Israel did not keep the Law. He says that because of their law-breaking, he will make them jealous and angry with a foolish nation – a nation that really isn't a nation.

Paul sees in this a prophecy that has been fulfilled because of Jesus. God is calling people from every tribe, nation and tongue to faith in him! People from all sorts of nations! Israel consistently rejected God, and God is now making the Jews jealous by saving people from around the world.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 10:18–21.

Then Paul quotes from Isaiah and even says Isaiah is more bold. God says he found people who didn't seek him! I've shown myself to people who didn't ask for me.

We can ask, "Why aren't more Jews saved?" Is it because they don't have enough information? No. Is it because they weren't as willing as others? No. The Gentile world wasn't willing either! Is it because they didn't seek God? Well, neither did the Gentile world. Paul is going back to his argument in Romans 9. He says that many Jews have rejected simply because God has left them in their sins, as a punishment for their sinfulness. (Keep in mind that Paul is going to explain this more in chapter 11. So, there is more here.) But God can do what he desires.

By the way, this should cause great awe and appreciation for God's mercy on us. You weren't saved because you were smarter or you did better at seeking after God. Romans 3 says that no one seeks after God naturally! Instead, God sought after you and saved you. Instead of trying to figure that out, how about you be amazed and humbled that the Creator God, who is Holy, Holy, Holy has welcomed you into his arms!

Now, even as I say all of this about God's sovereign grace, look at verse 21 and see how Paul reveals that Israel is responsible for their rejection: ²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."⁷

This verse reminded me of a new adventure in my family. This past week, my family received two kittens. They were rescued from a tree trunk with their mom about 4 weeks ago. So, these kittens are nervous. We brought them home this past Monday night, and it's a process of trying to get them to warm up to us. One of the little guys has been more accepting of us. He'll come up to us. He'll let us pet him. But the other one continues to try to find a hiding place in order to feel safe. He's scared of our hands, and when we open the door to come in, he first runs for cover. Then you see his head come out, and if his brother comes up to us, he may, too.

I can bring food in. And they'll come out, but they haven't preferred to be held. One will cry out. So, at this point, they take the benefits I can give them (a house, couches to take cover, a cat tree, litter box, food, water), but they don't want me. They'll even walk around me, but they don't want to be held.

Now, I know some of you who don't like cats will say, "They'll never want you." But, just go with me here in this illustration. When Paul says that God has held out his hands to the Israelites, it's like me with the cats. God holds his hands out, and the Israelites hide. The Israelites reject the hand that feeds them. They may walk around God. They may do things that God wants them to do. They may look spiritual and as though they've spent time *around* God, but they don't want to be held by God. They don't want to depend on God. They don't want to admit that they need salvation just like the rest of the world! They think they're good enough.

So, why do the Jews not accept salvation? God calls them **disobedient and contrary people**. They reject God and take his gifts. And, you know what? It's not just the Jewish people that do this. It's the whole world. Even religious people do this. They go to church. They wear the right clothes, they act nice. They are friendly and moral. But the deeper question is, "Do you know you're a sinner in need of a Savior? Will you submit to Jesus alone as your salvation and recognize none of your attainments mean anything in the judgment?" If you recoil at this, God says you're disobedient and contrary.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 10:21.

Why? Because you just want God's stuff. You don't want God. And yet God, every single day, holds out his hands of love to hold you. Will you trust him? Will you turn to him? Oh Ventura, be amazed at the love of God in Jesus. Many of us in this room can rejoice that God has rescued us! We didn't deserve it. We didn't attain it. Jesus has done it all for us. And we can be thankful there were people around us who proclaimed this message to us. God saves Gentiles!

Now, we must grow in our understanding of the gospel's call for people to proclaim and trust Jesus. Because of Jesus, rest in God's mission for your life. No matter how people respond to you or treat you, call everyone to faith in Jesus (Jews and Gentiles). While not everyone will call on God, God will always accomplish his purposes through you.

While not everyone will call on God, God will always accomplish his purposes through you. More people must come to faith in Jesus. We can take the privilege of being God's sent children and herald the good news to those around us.

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