

GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Romans 10:1-21

Key Verse: 10:9

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

In Chapter 9, we learned God exercised his sovereignty in his redemptive work. No one deserves justification, because everyone sinned. But God in his mercy and grace chose to save us from our sin and death. Praise God for loving us! In Chapter 10, Paul continues to address the problem of his people Israel. They had rejected the message of salvation. And the message was: "Jesus is the Lord." Anyone who believes in Jesus in his heart and declares him to be the Lord with his mouth is saved. As we meditate on this passage, let us think about the gospel—that it is about Jesus Christ and how God uses his servants to deliver the gospel to the world.

I. THE MESSAGE WE PROCLAIM: "JESUS IS THE LORD" (1-13)

In Chapter 9, Paul said he would give anything, including his own salvation, to see his people saved (9:2-3). He repeats the same desire in verse 1. *Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.* Sadly they rejected Jesus as their Savior. They rejected the covenant promise of God. How did it happen? Look at verses 2-3. *For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.* The Jews were zealous for God. No one could deny that. Paul himself was one of them. But Paul says that their zeal was not based on knowledge. Of course, they had a lot of knowledge. They studied the Old Testament more than anyone else did. But they missed the point. What is the point? The point of the Bible is that God sent his one and only Son Jesus to save sinners like us. Let us read verse 4. *Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.* Both the Old Testament and the New Testament point to Jesus. Christ is the culmination of the law in that he fulfilled the purpose of law (Mt 5:17) by dying on the cross to take away the sin of the world—something the law was powerless to do (8:3).

To Paul's dismay, the Jews did not know the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God is none other than Jesus. Actually the Jews knew Jesus. He was right there among them, speaking to them personally. But they would not accept him as the Son of God, the Messiah. They would not listen to his word. They did not submit to Jesus. Instead, they sought to establish their own righteousness based on the law. They rejected the Savior who had come to save them. They had him arrested and crucified. They thought they were doing a service to God. Their zeal based on the law was misguided.

Then what is the difference between the righteousness that is by the law and the righteousness that is by faith? Look at verse 5. *Moses writes this about the*

righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." This is from Leviticus 8:15. In essence, the righteousness by the law says that a person is made righteous when he keeps all the laws 100%, 24/7. The problem is that no one can do this. The Jews should have been the first ones to admit this. Paul did just that in Romans 7, crying out, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?" (7:24) However, the Jews refused to admit this. Instead, they sought to establish their own righteousness based on the law which was intended to get them ready for the Messiah. Then they rejected the Messiah who had come for them.

Even today, the righteousness by the law is in the minds of many people. If we invite them to church, they might say, "Christians are hypocrites. I am a pretty good person. I am better than most of them." The idea is that a person should be saved by his good deeds. Many religions of the world teach the same thing--that if you are good or do good things, you will go to heaven. But we know that we can never be good enough to merit God's righteousness, no matter how hard we try. We come to Christ, not because we are good, but because we are bad. Someone compared the church to a bath house where a lot of dirty people gather.

Then what is the righteousness that is by faith? Look at verses 6-7 (which is from Deuteronomy 30:11-14). *But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).* This is a difficult passage to understand, so let us make it simple. The main point is that salvation is not beyond our reach. We don't have to accomplish impossible tasks such as ascending to heaven or descending to the abyss in order to receive the grace of salvation. Why not? It is because God has done all the work already for us. Jesus came down from heaven because we could not climb up to him. We don't have to go down to the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead. God already raised him from the dead on the third day. Christ is the culmination of the law. He fulfilled all the requirements of the law when he died on the cross (8:4). He paid the price of our sins in full. On the cross, he declared, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). There is nothing we can do to earn our righteousness.

So how accessible is the righteousness that is by faith? Look at verse 8a. *But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, ..."* God is not far away from us; in fact, he is right here with us. God himself provided the way of salvation by sending Jesus to the earth and by raising him from the dead. All we have to do is to believe in the promise of God. That is the righteousness that is by faith.

Let us read verses 8-10 together. *But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* In these verses, St. Paul proclaims how we can be saved from our sin and death. First, we have to believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead after he had died on the cross as the Lamb of God to take away all our sins. Next, we must declare with our mouth, "Jesus is the Lord." That's it. There are no other requirements. When

we believe in our hearts that Jesus died on the cross to pay for the price of our sins and that God raised him from the dead on the third day to open the door for us to enter his kingdom, and we declare with our mouth, “Jesus is the Lord,” we are justified.

This is so simple that some intellectuals in Paul’s time were offended by the message he preached. They would say, “All my terrible sins are gone by simply believing in Jesus? Just like that? Sounds ridiculous.” They would have been more interested in Paul’s preaching if he had presented a complex algorithm or rigorous regiment designed to remove their sins systematically. But God made salvation so simple that anyone and everyone who believes can be saved, not just intellectuals. In fact, this is what Paul said 1 Corinthians 1:18-19: “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. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.’” Yes, the gospel of Jesus is simple. I believe this is by God’s design to make it accessible to everyone. In addition, if salvation is difficult to obtain, we would become proud after we obtain it, which takes us back to the original sin of pride!

There are a couple of points we need to say about this simple message of the gospel. One is that we have to know who Jesus is to believe in him. If someone says, “I believe in Jesus,” but has no clue about who Jesus is, the person’s faith is questionable. How can you believe in someone you don’t know? It’s like saying you believe in Santa Claus or tooth fairy. We have to know Jesus personally to believe in him in our hearts. This is the reason why we should study the Bible sincerely. The word of God teaches us who God is, who Jesus is, who we are, and what the world is. So who is Jesus to us? Is he a great philosopher? A great communicator? A great teacher? A healer? Yes. But above all, Paul says we must confess Jesus as our Lord. Jesus is our Savior. He is our Shepherd. He is our friend. But most of all, Jesus is our Lord. The Old Testament calls our God “the Lord God.” Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is God. He is the Lord, the Master. We must obey his words. He is the Creator and Owner of our lives. Our lives are in his hand. This is Jesus we believe in our hearts. This is the Lord Jesus we declare with our mouth.

Some people might ask, isn’t it enough to believe in heart? Why do we have to confess with our mouth? Of course, it all starts when God moves our hearts. We believe first in our hearts before we can make a confession. Without believing in heart, confession wouldn’t be genuine. But Jesus wants us to make a confession of faith. He asked his twelve disciples the question, “Who do you say I am?” We must confess our faith and love verbally, publicly, to Jesus that he is our Lord. Faith may be in one’s heart, but it has to be activated through a confession. Do you love your mother in your heart? Your wife? Of course, but it is also important for you make a confession of love for them. Our faith is about our personal relationship with the Lord, but we must also declare our faith. We should not be ashamed of Jesus before other people. Jesus said: “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels” (Mk 8:38).

The will of Henry J. Heinz, the founder of the famous ketchup company in Pittsburgh, began with the following sentence: “I desire to set forth, at the very beginning of this Will, as the most important item in it, a confession of my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior.” This man of faith left his spiritual legacy to his children. Of course, we shouldn’t wait until we die to make our confession of Jesus.

Look at verses 11-13. *As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* Paul quotes from the Scriptures of Isaiah (28:16) and Joel (3:32) to remind us of God’s promises. Anyone who believes in Jesus will never be put to shame. This does not mean that we Christians won’t have any trials in life. But it assures that God will keep his promise—that those who believe in the Lord will be saved. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all. Let us read verse 13 together. ...*for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* Everyone needs to be saved. All peoples of the world need Jesus as their Savior. Why? It is because sin is an equal opportunity killer. No one is immune to sin. There is no one righteous, not even one. So everyone needs Jesus. And God’s promise is that *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* This is the reason why the gospel must be preached to all peoples of the world.

II. THE BEAUTIFUL FEET OF GOSPEL MESSENGERS (14-21)

Anyone who believes in Jesus will be saved. But how does a person come to know Jesus and confess him to be his Lord? This is the question Paul asks in verses 14-15. *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* A chain reaction starts when a servant of God shares the gospel of Jesus with a person. By hearing the good news, the person believes in Jesus. Then he calls on the name of the Lord. Then he is saved from his sin and death. He receives eternal life. It’s important to know that this chain reaction starts with someone preaching to him. No one can believe in Jesus until they hear the gospel. This is the reason why Jesus gave us the great commission. He said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mk 16:15). St. Paul also said, “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2Ti 4:2).

We find, however, preaching the word of God is not so easy. All of us are busy or busy-minded. Unless we make it our first priority in life, preaching the gospel is often set aside. Sharing the gospel does not automatically become part of our Christian life unless we make it. Preaching requires legwork. So Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:7 about the beautiful feet. Look at verse 15b again. *As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* Some people may question why God needs our foot work when he can carry out his own ministry, saving those whom he wants to save. This was what many church leaders in England thought in the late 1700s. When a young man shared his world mission vision at a meeting, one of the leaders told him, “Sit down,

young man. If God wants to convert the heathen, he will do it without consulting with you or me!” This young man was William Carey. He was not discouraged by their objections. Instead, he studied the word of God more diligently to prepare himself for the mission work. He published a mission book with Romans 10:10-15 as the key verses. Carey became an influential missionary to India. His feet were beautiful in God’s eyes because he brought the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of India.

God uses his servants to carry the gospel to the unbelieving world. It is his way of saving sinners. He could do everything himself. But he wants us to participate in his work of salvation. Jesus also helped his disciples to participate in his work. Once he fed a crowd of 5,000 out of his compassion for them. But he asked his disciples to do small things. Andrew brought a lunch box with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish for him to use. Jesus told his disciples to arrange the crowd to sit down in groups. They distributed the food and collected the leftovers. Salvation is the work of God. We cannot change anyone on our own. We cannot save anyone. But we can be his instruments in his redemptive work. Preaching the gospel is also a privilege and blessing for us. On his return, Jesus will say to us, “Well done, my good and faithful servant!”

Look at verses 16-18. *But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”* Faith in Jesus comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Again, our Bible study is very precious! Sadly, not everyone who hears the word of God believes. The case in point is the Israelites. Not all of them accepted the good news. They heard the good news, many of them directly from the Lord, but they did not believe the message. It was a tragedy.

In verses 19-21, Paul asks the question, “Did God give up when Israel did not believe?” Paul says no. He explains that the rejection of the gospel by the Israelites opened a door for the Gentiles. Both Moses and Isaiah testified that the Gentiles would believe the message of salvation they would hear (19-20). Also, even though some of his own people rejected the good news of Jesus Christ, God did not give up on the nation as a whole, as we will learn in Romans 11. Still, God’s heart is broken. God is like the father of the prodigal son. He is waiting at the gate for his son to return home. Look at verse 21. *But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”*

We learned today that Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. So our message to a lost world is “Jesus is the Lord.” Let’s read verse 9. *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* May God help each of us to have beautiful feet by sharing the gospel of Jesus with young people of our time!