



(Romans 10:14-21)

Intro: Paul pointed out last week that God's way of salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by keeping the Law or doing good deeds. Keep in mind, that Paul is answering his critics' **charge that God has not been fair to Israel**. He responds that the Jews' failure to obtain a right standing with God is not God's fault. The grace-way of salvation has been clearly revealed to them. They have to take full responsibility for their rejection of Jesus Christ.

Turning to the Prophet Joel (2:32), Paul reminded his readers in verse 13 that "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." He explained in verse 12 "there is no distinction between Jew or Greek." God is very gracious and abounding in riches for all who call upon Him. As noted last week, to call on the Lord means to pray in faith for salvation through Christ alone.

This universal offer of salvation leads to several additional objections raised by Paul's Jewish opponents. Paul will show conclusively, that the message of salvation had come to the Jews, but they refused to come by faith, and sought to promote their own works-based righteousness. The remainder of this passage is actually built upon three objections. First, salvation requires belief in the message preached (vv. 14-17). Second, could it be that Israel had never heard the message? (v. 18). Third, could it be that Israel simply did not understand the message? (vv. 19-21).

I. Salvation Requires Belief In The Message Preached (vv. 14-17)

14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? **15** And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"

God's promise of universal salvation to everyone who calls upon Him in faith, is based upon a fourfold process. Men cannot call upon Him in whom they have not believed, and of course, they cannot believe in Him of whom they have never heard. And they would never hear the good news about God's gracious salvation without a preacher, and preachers can't preach unless they

are sent out by God to preach. Paul's point here is that salvation is based on our calling out to God, which requires belief based on hearing, and hearing that is based on preaching carried out by living messengers (heralds) that God sends out.

Here we have the four steps leading to every man's salvation. Paul uses a literary device known as a *chain-syllogism* in which each point builds upon the former. Let's walk through the four steps in the chain.

1. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?

Salvation begins with our calling out to God in faith to save us. There comes a time in each of our lives where we come to realize our need for salvation, and we place our faith in God's provision of His Son, who died in our place. Of course we cannot call on or believe in the Lord Jesus until we hear the good news about what He has done for us. Point number two—

2. How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?

The point here is that faith depends on knowledge. One must hear the Gospel before he can be expected either to receive it or reject it. Somebody who has come to faith in Christ shares the Gospel with somebody who doesn't know Him, and when they hear the good news about Christ, they believe it and invite Christ to come into their heart.

People who came to believe in Christ did so because they heard the Good News about Him shared by word of mouth. This was particularly true in Paul's day, because the message about Christ had not yet been written. This leads to the third link in Paul's chain.

3. How shall they hear without a preacher?

In order for people to hear the good news someone must go out and share it. The word "preacher" is a rather misleading translation. It implies that the one who is sent out to communicate the gospel must be a paid clergyman. The term "preacher" here actually means "messenger," "to announce," or "herald." A preacher is anyone who proclaims God's Good News. Every believer is responsible to preach, literally, to announce the Good News about Christ to the lost. In fact, Christ saved us to serve (Mark 10:45).

What about the people in your life, have they heard the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? How about your family members? Your friends, those you work with, your neighbors. Have you shared God's Good News with them? They may never hear if you don't share with them. Pray and ask God to help you begin sharing His Good News with the people in your life. **This leads to the fourth link in this chain, v. 15**

4. How shall they preach unless they are sent? (v. 15)

A herald of the Word must be sent out. To be "sent" suggests at least two things: that one operates under a higher authority and that his message does not originate with himself, but is given him by the sending authority. The One doing the sending is God, although He may use a church or mission agency. Paul may have been reflecting on his own experience of being sent out from the Church at Antioch by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-3). In any event, he reminds us in **2 Corinthians 5:18-20** that "God reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." God has appointed every believer to serve as an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

Now, I realize that not all of us have been called to serve as pastors or missionaries. However, all of us have been called to share our faith with lost people. This is clear from Christ's commission to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20. He commanded them, and by way of extension each of us, to go forth in His power and lead lost men and women to faith in Him. We go forth under God's authority, with His message and not our own.

15 Paul once again supports his argument with a quotation from the prophets this time from Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15,

Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"

Those who share the Good News of salvation through faith in Christ are welcomed by those who believe. They are praised for their beautiful feet, which helped them carry God's Good News of salvation to the Israelites in Paul's day. The "glad tidings" or "news of peace" they conveyed spoke of "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), that was theirs through faith in Jesus Christ.

The background of this prophecy in **Isaiah 52:7** referred to the messenger who would bring the good news of Israel's imminent release from captivity in Babylon. The Nahum (1:15) reference referred to the destruction of the Assyrian Empire, the hated enemies of the Jews. Nahum's prediction of God's judgment on Nineveh was good news to the Jews. They proclaimed that Nahum's feet, which brought this good news, were beautiful.

Isaiah's prophecy in 52:7 also has an Eschatological/future fulfillment that predicts Christ's return and the establishment of His glorious Kingdom Rule from Mount Zion. The feet of those carrying forth this message, "That our God has defeated all of His enemies, and is now reigning in glory from Mount Zion," will be called beautiful indeed.

While God's gracious offer of righteousness by faith in Christ had been universally proclaimed to all, Jews and Gentiles alike, not all had responded v. 16

16 However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"

This quote from **Isaiah 53:1** supports the sad fact that most Jews did not heed the glad tidings shared by God's messengers. This was true in Isaiah's day, and continued to be true in Paul's day as well. Paul concludes in v. 17

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Paul asserts once again, that faith comes from hearing, responding in faith to the message about Christ. God had been and continued to be fair to the Jews. However, they rejected His Servant, who He sent to bear the sins of the world.

This leads Paul to deal with another objection that could be raised by his Jewish opponents, who might say, "They were not granted adequate opportunity to hear the message." I mean since faith comes from hearing, if the Jews had heard, they would certainly have believed. Right? Paul responds in v. 18

II. Israel Had Heard The Message Of Salvation (v. 18)

18 But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have;

Paul meets this objection with an affirmative: “Of course they have heard!” He supports his answer with a quotation from **Psalm 19:4**

“THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH,
AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.”

If the Jews didn’t believe it wasn’t because they hadn’t heard. Their opportunity to hear and respond to God’s gracious message of salvation through faith was as wide as the star-studded heavens. Paul is not saying that every single person on earth has heard and understood the Gospel of grace. He is simply saying that Israel had every opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel. The Jews could not hope to be excused on the basis that they had not heard the Good News. **Israel had heard, but she had failed to heed.**

Paul anticipates another argument. “Perhaps Israel heard the message, but they simply failed to understand it, v. 19

III. Israel Willfully Rejected God’s Offer Of Salvation (vv. 19-21)

19 But I say, surely Israel did not know or understand, did they?

Paul ushers forth several more quotes from the Old Testament to support the fact that Israel had indeed understood God’s message of grace. Their problem was they had willfully rejected God’s gracious offer of salvation. The first quotation is from Deuteronomy 32:

At the first Moses says (Deut. 32:21),

“I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION,
BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU.”

Paul used Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 32:21 to remind his readers of how God often used other nations to carry out His Divine purposes. Paul’s point is this: If unenlightened Gentiles outside God’s covenant blessings to Israel, and ignorant of His great revelation of Himself in the Old Testament; if they could understand the Gospel, then certainly the Jews could understand it. The Jews could not argue that God’s Gospel of grace was beyond their ability to understand. **Paul continues with another quote from Isaiah 65:1**

And Isaiah is very bold and says, verse 20

“I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME,
I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME.”

This quote is even more significant. I mean, if the Gentiles who were not even looking for God found Him; then certainly He was available to the Jews, who spent their entire lives searching for Him. The Jews had no basis for the claim that they could not understand God’s message.

Israel’s rejection of the Gospel of God’s grace had nothing to do with a lack of opportunity to hear or ability to understand. It rested solely on the nation’s willful and obstinate refusal to come to God on His terms and in His way; based on the sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus Christ. They were determined to do it their way.

Nobody could blame Israel’s unbelief on God. They insisted on personal merit based on works to obtain God’s favor, as we saw last Sunday morning. God is so very gracious, as we see in this last Old Testament quote from Isaiah 65:2.

21 But as for Israel He says, “ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE.”

What a picture of unceasing love. God continued to stretch out His hands to a disobedient and obstinate people, generation after generation; longing to draw them to Himself. But they would not have Him. One commentator notes that “God’s outstretched arms were the symbol of that incessant pleading love which Israel throughout all its history had despised” (J. Denney, *Romans*, 2:675). If interested read the prophetic Book of Hosea or Amos. **Please note:** God’s gracious ministry to us Gentiles has not canceled out His love for the Jews. While Israel as a nation has been *temporarily set aside*, God continues to graciously stretch out His arms of love to individual Jews, convincing many that Jesus Christ is their Messiah and Savior.

In the same way God stretches forth His hands to us today inviting us to come to Him. Why do so many people today reject the Gospel? It is not because they have not heard or understood the message of salvation by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone. They reject the Gospel because of disobedience and self-willed defiance of God.

Closing story: Roughly two years after our coming to faith in Christ, in December of 1975, the Lord directed us to attend Biola Bible College, in La

Mirada, California. During my time at Biola I met and became friends with a young man named Timothy. He was in charge of the post office on campus at Biola. As I got to know Tim, he eventually shared his testimony with me of how he came to faith in Christ.

Tim was the son of a very prominent Lawyer in Los Angeles. He shared with me how during his studies at Berkley, President Nixon visited his campus. This was at the height of the Vietnam War. Tim was a member of a radical student group protesting the Vietnam War. He recounted to me how during a protest the Secret service arrested him and a number of his fellow protestors. He says he was beaten and tortured for days on end. He was subjected to shock treatments and other inhumane torture. Tim was very fortunate because his father, finding out about his arrest and detainment, was able to get him released.

Upon returning home, Tim found himself very depressed, and suicidal. Tim was so depressed that he decided to take his own life. One afternoon as he was sitting alone by the pool, he tied a very heavy cement weight to his ankle and pushed it into the deep end of the pool. He was drug to the bottom of the pool. As the oxygen in his lungs ran out, Tim decided that taking his life wasn't such a good idea after all. In desperation he cried out "Jesus save me." He says the rope around his ankle came loose, and he made it to the surface of the pool.

Tim drug himself out of the pool, and reached into his back pocket for the little Gideon Bible that a man had given him. As he began reading, he discovered God's plan of salvation in Romans 10 and especially verse 13, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Tim cried out to God and invited Jesus Christ to come into his heart as his Savior and Lord. God eventually led Tim to Biola Bible College, where he was studying God's Word to serve Him all the days of his life."

Closing invitation and prayer:

O dear believer surrender yourself totally to Christ this morning, and begin enjoying His peace and blessings in your life. If you have never called out to God in faith, and invited Jesus Christ to come into your heart, won't you accept Him into your heart as I close in prayer?

Closing Song: Write Your Story