

Romans (64) The Work of Grace in Salvation

Let us turn to Romans 10 in which we will read verses 14 through 21.

The apostle had declared that all people everywhere, whether Jew or Gentile, are saved through Jesus Christ. Romans 10:13 declares, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” The expression, “who calls upon the Lord” is actually an expression that is common in the Old Testament in which people were expressing their worship of the One true God. We may read these references in Genesis. In Genesis 4:26 we read, “To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time *people began to call upon the name of the LORD.*” Later the Scriptures record Abraham calling upon the Lord on a number of occasions. Genesis 12:8 reads, “From there he (Abraham) moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and *called upon the name of the LORD.*” In Genesis 13:3f it is said of Abraham, “And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place where he had made an altar at the first. *And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.*” And then in Genesis 21:33 we read, “Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba *and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.*” It was Elijah who challenged the priests of Baal, “And you call upon the name of your god, *and I will call upon the name of the LORD,* and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” (1 Kings 18:24). In one of the imprecatory psalms, the psalmist wrote, “Pour out Your anger on the nations that do not know You, and on the kingdoms that *do not call upon Your name!*” (Psa. 79:6). We read of the psalmist calling upon the Lord in the midst of his difficulty:

I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice and my supplications.
²Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.

³The pains of death surrounded me,
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;
I found trouble and sorrow.
⁴*Then I called upon the name of the LORD:*
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”

The Psalmist then resolved that he would be faithful always to call upon His God.

¹²What shall I render to the LORD
For all His benefits toward me?
¹³I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
¹⁴I will pay my vows to the LORD
Now in the presence of all His people. (Psalm 116:1-4, 12-14)

We see, therefore, that this expression, “to call upon the Lord” is the common way to describe the people of God who call upon Him in prayer and worship.

Paul’s use of the clause in Romans 10:13 is a quotation of Joel 2:32. It is the Old Testament prophecy that the apostle Peter quoted, declaring Joel’s prophecy to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The passage reads as follows:

²⁸“And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.
²⁹And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

³⁰“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth:
Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.
³¹The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.
³²And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.
For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance,
As the LORD has said,
Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

This is the verse that Paul quotes in Romans 10:13, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” This is significant. The apostle Paul cites and applies the Old Testament expression to call upon the Lord which is always used when people call upon God, but Paul applies the reference “Lord” to Jesus Christ, for “the Lord” within the context of Romans 10 is the crucified, risen, and enthroned Lord over all, Jesus Christ. This, therefore, is one of the clearest ways in which the New Testament testifies of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God who is to be called upon in worship as the people of God called upon God throughout Old Testament history.

When Paul applies the same to Christ this is another example of the practice of taking Old Testament passages which refer to God without qualification and applying them to Christ. It was the distinguishing mark of the New Testament believers that they called upon the name of the Lord Jesus (cf. Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22) and therefore accorded him the worship that belonged to him alone.¹

We see, therefore, that to call upon the Lord for salvation is to call upon Jesus Christ as God. Unless one believes in the deity of our Savior, he cannot be saved. The only “Jesus”, who is able to save a sinner from sin, can do so, because Jesus Christ is “God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” (Rom. 9:5).

But whereas God, who was called upon through the period of Old Testament history, was the covenant God of Israel almost exclusively throughout the Old Testament period, now God saves Jew and Gentile alike. God saves all from sin who call upon Jesus Christ ***because He is Lord of all***. Verse 12 reads, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; ***for the same Lord is Lord of all***, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him.”

We now arrive to Romans 10:14ff in which we are told how it is that God saves His people. Here we read that He does so through faith in the Lord Jesus that is the result of hearing the word of gospel. We read in verses 14ff:

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

¹⁸But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for

¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2 (Eerdmans, 1965), 57.

“Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹But 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.”

²⁰Then 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.”

²¹But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

Paul declared that all people everywhere who call upon the Lord (as the Scriptures define and depict as the expression of true faith), that these will be saved on the Day of Judgment. But in order for people to call upon the Lord several essential events need to have taken place. “What is communicated in Romans 10:14-15 and 17 is a principle that applies equally to both Jews and Gentiles: the steps of the chain must be realized if people are going to call on the Lord and be saved.”² Before one will or can call upon the Lord there must be faith. Before faith can be present the essential truth to be believed must be proclaimed. In order for that truth to be proclaimed, there needs to be a message bearer. In order for one to bear the good news to the sinner, God must send him.

The apostle gave a series of five rhetorical questions in order to give emphasis to the importance of what he was writing. These are set forth in reverse order. The end or goal is identified first and then the steps are traced back to what is necessary to begin the work of God bringing salvation to His people.

Paul has just asserted that one must call on the Lord to be saved. Verses 14 -15 outline the steps that one must fulfill to facilitate calling on the Lord. The logical progression of thought is sketched in with a series of rhetorical questions. The culmination of the series is actually expressed in the first item—calling on the Lord, connecting to the assertion of verse 13 that one must call on the Lord to be saved. It follows, then, that the last item in the series (being sent in v. 15a) represents the foundational element in the logical train of thought that climaxes with calling on the Lord for salvation. The temporal sequence is as follows: (1) one must be sent; (2) the one sent must preach the good news; (3) those to whom he is sent and preaches must hear the message proclaimed; (4) the message heard must be believed; and (5) those who believe must call on the Lord for salvation.³

Why did Paul express these truths in reverse order? **William Hendriksen** proposed an answer:

What may have been the reason for Paul’s decision to arrange these links in this regressive order?

To answer this question we should bear in mind that the apostle was not only a fully inspired, very learned, deep-thinking theologian; he was also a very practical, warm-hearted Christian friend. As such he may well have had a two-fold purpose in mind for writing as he did.

First of all, he is thinking of the audience, the one in Rome, to be sure, but, along the line of the centuries to follow, any audience, including also today’s. For the audience, then, and for every person in that audience, the apostle has so arranged the series that the reference to God—or, if one prefers, to Jesus Christ—who commissioned the preacher, would be mentioned last of all, in order that all the emphasis might fall upon him! Every person in the audience must be made aware of the fact that when he rejects the preacher who, as a faithful minister of the word, with insight and enthusiasm presents the glad and glorious

² Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 567.

³ *Ibid*, p. 564.

tidings of salvation in Christ, *then he is rejecting Jesus Christ himself!* In addressing the seventy (or seventy-two) missionaries Jesus said, “He who listens to you listens to me, but he who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16).

Secondly, Paul is thinking of the preacher. The climatic reference to the duly commissioned preacher contains a lesson for him also. Any preacher better be sure that he has actually been called of God to do this kind of work. To arrive at a true answer to this question he should turn to Jeremiah 23:21, 22. If this preacher is earnestly and prayerfully trying to do that which is mentioned in the twenty-second verse, he will find it much easier to arrive at a positive and encouraging answer to the question with reference to the genuine character of his ordination.⁴

The reference Hendriksen makes reads as follows: “

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.
I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.
²²But if they had stood in My counsel,
And had caused My people to hear My words,
Then they would have turned them from their evil way
And from the evil of their doings.” (Jer. 23:21f)

Let us take each of these five rhetorical questions of Romans 10:14ff in turn. *First*, Paul declared, “**How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?**” This underscores the truth we declared last week of the weakness, even error, of much of evangelistic work conducted by evangelicals. Although they may not realize it or acknowledge it, they assume that to call upon the Lord in a sinner’s prayer will result in faith or it would be itself an expression of faith. **But The Word of God clearly declares here that calling upon the Lord that results in salvation cannot take place unless there is first faith.** The rhetorical question that Paul asserts assumes that one cannot call upon the Lord rightly, savingly, unless there is the presence of saving faith. If we encourage people “to call upon the Lord” but there is not the evidence of faith first, and then we assure them they have salvation because they “called upon the Lord”, we have misrepresented the gospel and have misled our “converts.” We are to do all we can to see true faith realized and exhibited, and we do that through faithfully proclaiming Jesus Christ is Lord. We will know that they have true faith when we see them calling upon the Lord.

By the way, the calling upon “the Lord” is just that: saving faith is that which calls upon *Jesus Christ as Lord over all* in order to be saved by Him. Saving faith is consistent with the teaching that is commonly known as “Lordship salvation.” That term is not the preferred one by many because it can be misleading and its opposers certainly have misrepresented it. The important book that brought the matter forward in evangelicalism was written by **John MacArthur**, which was entitled, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, which was published in 1988.⁵ It divided evangelicalism into two camps, those who believed in Lordship salvation and those who claimed saving faith is not necessarily a belief that is seen in repentance from sin and submission to Jesus Christ as Lord.⁶ But MacArthur himself did not particularly care for the description of the Bible’s teaching as “Lordship Salvation.” He wrote,

I don’t like the term *Lordship salvation*. I reject the connotation intended by those who coined the phrase. It insinuates that a submissive heart is extraneous or supplementary to saving faith. Although I have reluctantly used the term to describe my views, it is a concession to popular usage. Surrender to Jesus’

⁴ William Hendriksen, *Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1980, 1981), pp. 349f.

⁵ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Academie Books, 1988).

⁶ The one who wrote a book to refute MacArthur’s book was Zane Hodges, the professor of Systematic Theology at the Dallas Theological Seminary, who wrote, *Absolutely Free* (Zondervan, 1989). This was a book expounding terrible error that taught “cheap grace”, or “easy believeism”, that one could have Jesus as Savior but not as Lord.

lordship is not an addendum to the biblical terms of salvation; the summons to submission is at the heart of the gospel invitation throughout Scripture.⁷

Lordship salvation is simply this: “The gospel call to faith presupposes that sinners must repent of their sin and yield to Christ’s authority. That, in a sentence, is what “lordship salvation” teaches.”⁸ Romans 10:13f is quite declarative about this matter, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?” One must believe on the name of **the Lord** before one can call upon Him for salvation.

Second, Paul declared, “*And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?*” This speaks of *the relationship of faith with knowledge of necessary truth* regarding salvation through Jesus Christ. What we said last Lord’s day can be repeated here.

For the gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of doctrines, that is, biblical teachings about subjects of God’s Triune and holy nature, God’s Law, His justice, and His wrath, as well as an understanding of His love, His mercy and grace. In addition, there must be understanding of who Christ is, His deity and humanity, redemption through His blood, His resurrection, His present ministry of mediation as Prophet, Priest, and King. Furthermore, there must be an understanding of doctrines of repentance, faith, perseverance, as well as an understanding of the Kingdom of God, of Christ’s coming and the Day of Judgment. These are doctrines that are part of the gospel. To neglect doctrine drains the gospel of substance. Strip the gospel of substantive doctrine and you end up with another gospel.

The apostle Paul said that one cannot believe on Jesus as Lord unto salvation unless he has first “heard” the news regarding Him. The Gospel includes doctrine, substantive biblical teaching. Paul expressed it this way in **Romans 6:17**, “But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, *yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*” Salvation is through faith in the person of Jesus Christ, but an understanding of who that person is may be found only in the doctrine of Holy Scripture that testifies of Christ and reveals to us who He is and what He has done. “Belief in Christ cannot exist without knowledge of Him.”⁹

The main point is that the saving relation to Christ involved in calling upon His name is not something that can occur in a vacuum; it occurs only in a context created by proclamation of the gospel on the part of those commissioned to proclaim it.¹⁰

Third, Paul asked, “*And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*” God has determined that people will be saved through faith in Jesus the Lord through a message that is proclaimed to them by another human being. Sometimes the word is “heard” when it is read, say through a book or a gospel tract. But the point is that God has chosen to convey the gospel through human instrumentality. Now, there have been times in history when God revealed His Word, His will, through angels and through dreams and visions, but God’s primary means of bringing people to salvation is through one person telling another person about salvation through Jesus Christ.

When God would bring the Ethiopian Eunuch to salvation, he sent Philip to tell him and teach him the gospel.

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert. ²⁷So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”

⁷ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Word Publishing, 1993, 2000), p. 23.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 2175.

¹⁰ Murray, *Romans*, vol. 2, p. 59.

³⁰So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer *is* silent,
So He opened not His mouth.

³³In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
And who will declare His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth.”

³⁴So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. (Acts 8:1-35)

In Acts 8:26 we read that the angel of the Lord told Philip to go to the place where he would be able to speak to this Eunuch so that he would be saved. The angel of the Lord could have spoken directly to the Ethiopian, but God determined that He would save this man through the sending of His servant Philip. The eunuch acknowledged his need for someone to teach him even though he had the Scriptures open before him. He asked, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” God has determined that it is through the preaching of the Gospel that He will save them who believe.

When the Lord would bring the Samaritans to salvation, He sent to them Philip also.

⁴Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. (Acts 8:4-6)

When God would bring salvation to the Roman centurion, Cornelius, God called Peter to go to the house of Cornelius to bring them the gospel. We read in Acts 10.

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ³About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius.”

⁴And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?”

And he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.” ⁷When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, ⁸and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”

¹⁴But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”

¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.” ¹⁶his happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

¹⁷Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood at the gate ¹⁸and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.

¹⁹And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.”

²¹And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?”

²²And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send *for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.*” (Acts 10:1-22)

Later in the passage Cornelius told Peter what had led him to call Peter to come to his house.

³⁰And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³²Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ ³³So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. *Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.*” (Acts 10:30-33)

The angel came and had spoken to Peter. The angel could have just as easily explained to Cornelius the way of salvation. But God would send Peter to communicate the gospel to Cornelius and his household. It is God’s will to use human messengers to make His gospel known to the world.

The *fourth* rhetorical question in **verse 15** reads, “*And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*” Here we see the need for **a special call of God to the public proclamation of the Word of God**. In order for people to be saved, they need to have God send them proclaimers of His gospel.

The Lord Himself calls and equips men to minister His Word to His people. Indeed, all believers may serve the Lord in teaching one another the Word of God as the Lord enables them. But the Lord calls some men specifically and uniquely to lead His churches through the proclamation and administration of the Word of God. There is a divine call to the ministry of the Word of God that God extends to specific men whom He has chosen. We might cite **John Newton** in this regard:

None but the He who made the world can make a Minister of the Gospel... If a young man has capacity, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator; but a true Minister must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavors of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received.¹¹

God “sending” a man forth to preach His Word publically in the church may be analogous to the Lord sending forth His prophets under the Old Testament economy. The prophets that spoke for God to His people were men that God had chosen, called, and equipped for their task. This was true for Moses (Exo. 3), Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah (Isaiah 6), Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:3ff), and all the others. However there were some, even many, who claimed to speak for God, but God had not sent them. We read of these in Jeremiah’s prophecy.

And the LORD said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. *I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them.* They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.” (Jer. 14:14)

When God determines to judge a nation, He will commonly withhold calling men into the ministry of His Word. In the 8th century BC prophets were scarce in the northern kingdom of Israel. God called a man, a man from the southern kingdom of Judah, a farmer who grew figs. God sent him to the north to proclaim His Word. This was a portion of God’s message through **Amos**:

¹¹ Quoted in Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991, orig. 1830), p. 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. ¹¹“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when ***I will send a famine on the land-- not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.*** ¹²They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.” (Amos 8:10-12)

I would suggest that one of the Lord’s greatest curses on this land today is the relatively few men that He has called and equipped to stand in pulpits across this land and proclaim His Word faithfully, clearly, without apology or compromise. Many Christians in parts of this land cannot find a church where there is a man of integrity who will minister the Word of God faithfully and who lives in a manner consistent with his message. They have searched but are repeatedly disappointed and discouraged.

False ministers of Christ are the scourge of the land. Whereas the Lord in His righteous judgment withholds true men from being called and sent, the devil is quick to fill pulpits. Find a church with some good men looking for a good man to fill their pulpit and speak with them! They have discovered what **J. C. Philpot** concluded in London 150 years ago. In a sermon he described what a person learns as he matures in the faith, growing in grace:

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings, mysterious changes, and ever-varying exercises of his soul, he becomes established in a deep feeling of his own folly and God’s wisdom, of his own weakness and Christ’s strength, of his own sinfulness and the Lord’s goodness, of his own backslidings and the Spirit’s recoveries, of his own base ingratitude and Jehovah’s longsuffering, of the aboundings of sin and the super-aboundings of grace. He thus becomes daily more and more confirmed in the vanity of the creature, the utter helplessness of man, the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of the human heart, the sovereignty of distinguishing grace, ***the fewness of heaven-taught ministers***, the scanty number of living souls, and the great rareness of true religion. Nor are these convictions borrowed ideas, floating opinions, crude, half-digested sentiments or articles of a creed, which may be right or may be wrong; but they are things known by him as certainly, and felt as evidently as any material object that his eye sees, or his hand touches.

The devil has his men ready to step forward and stand before the people of God. Paul wrote of men in the church:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. (2 Co 11:13-15)

These men can stand in the pulpit, open their Bibles, proclaim God’s Word to the people, but the people are unaffected by the Word, for the Lord is not with them. They do not teach the Word rightly or in balance. They fail to proclaim “the whole counsel of God” (cf. Acts 20:27). These uncalled preachers withhold some truths of the Bible from their people or they are highly selective of their texts, because they perceive that the people will not receive the message. We may again call upon the prophecy of Jeremiah in which God said,

“Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams,” declares the LORD, “and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. ***So they do not profit this people at all,***” declares the LORD. (Jer. 23:32)

Others have spoken about the problem of uncalled men in the pulpit. **Matthew Henry** wrote against this problem of uncalled men: “We must not be ***forward*** to put ourselves in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Pride often appears in this, under the pretense of a desire to be useful. If the motive be correct, it is good; ***but humility will wait for a call.***”¹² **Charles Bridges** wrote of the Church of England: “The national Church groans and bleeds from the crown of its head to the sole of its feet from the daily intrusion of unworthy men into the

¹² Quoted in a footnote in Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991, orig. 1830), p. 96.

Ministry...¹³ **Lloyd-Jones** wrote of the common problem of men not called by the Lord who enter the ministry:

The more common occurrence is that men feel called who are not called; and it is the business of the Church to see to this and to handle the situation. I could give many examples and illustrations of this. I have always felt when someone has come to me and told me that he has been called to be a preacher, that my main business is to put every conceivable obstacle that I can think of in his way...

This is a most subtle matter. One's nature, or one's ambition, or one's liking for particular offices, or particular tasks, may create in one a desire to be a preacher, and we persuade ourselves that this is the Spirit of God leading us. I have known this happens many times; and one of the most painful tasks that ever confronts a minister is to discourage a man who comes to him in that way.¹⁴

The call of God to a man to the Gospel ministry is personal, subjective, and may vary in detail from one man to another. One Baptist pastor, **Isaac Backus**, stands out in history as one who promoted the special call of God to the Gospel ministry. He lived and ministered here in Massachusetts in the 18th century. He wrote this of his own call:

Hitherto a private life had been my choice and delight; but a new scene was before me, which I had no idea of, till I was led into it in the following manner. Being at a certain house where a number of the saints were met, the command, 'pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest,' was read and spoken upon. A conviction seized my mind that God had given me abilities which His church had a right to the use of, and which I could not withhold with a clear conscience. Soon after, a spirit of prayer for divine teaching was given me in a remarkable manner, and eternal things were brought into a near view, with a clear sight of the truth and the harmony of the Holy Scriptures; also these words were impressed on my mind: "Son of man, eat this scroll." Never did I more sensibly eat natural food than did my soul feast upon the solid feast upon the solid truths of God's Word. Yet I did not then conclude that I should ever preach the Gospel in public.

"A few days after, our minister invited me to go with him to Colchester and Lyme, where there was a revival of religion. I went accordingly, and on the journey two souls were hopefully converted. I returned home with rejoicing, and much life in my soul. The next day, September 27, 1746, new views were given me beyond those which I had before received. My business led me out to work alone in the woods, where, with none to interrupt me, I had such converse with my God as I never had before. His former teachings now came to this point, *that He called me to preach His Gospel*. And I was led to count the cost of obedience to the will of God in this work, as distinctly as ever to cast up any particular sum. Many and great enemies appeared in my way, reproaches, losses, imprisonment, and death; but God showed me that He could make them all fly from my path as chaff flies before the wind. I thought of my own ignorance and weakness; but He gave me to see that He had knowledge and strength for me. I urged the plea that I was slow of speech and very bashful; but the answer came: cannot He who formed man's mouth cause him to speak? I said if I go and preach the Gospel with success, I might be lifted up with pride and fall as many others have done. This difficulty seemed to me like a great mountain, rising far above all the rest; but God said, *My grace is sufficient for thee*; the mountain was taken away and every excuse gone, so that it appeared like trifling with Divine majesty to make another objection. And though I looked upon the work as too great for an angel to go through with in his own strength, yet I saw it was very easy for God to carry such a poor worm through it, make him faithful unto death, and give him at last a crown of life. So I was enabled then to give up my soul and body afresh to God, with all my interest, to serve Him in preaching His Gospel. He then gave me a particular message from the fifty-third Psalm, to lay open the universal corruption of mankind. As our church allowed each brother free liberty to improve his gift in teaching, I delivered that message the next day (Lord's day, September 28, 1746) with special clearness, and with acceptance to the church. And as I was then free from all worldly engagements, I devoted my whole time to that great work."

¹³ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁴ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, **Preaching and Preachers** (Zondervan, 1971), pp. 108f.

Isaac Backus preached for over 61 years, having started and ministered in over 50 Baptist churches. He pastored in the days when the state would not permit him to preach because the state church would not authorize him. In 1753 Backus published a book entitled, ***“Discourse on the Nature and Necessity of an Internal Call to Preach the Everlasting Gospel.”*** He asserted in it that “all true ministers of the Gospel are called into that work by the special influences of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁵ He asserted that a true minister’s qualifications consist more in “divine enlightening than in human learning.”¹⁶ He wrote:

...the Holy Spirit inwardly calls men to preach the Word, by giving them a specially clear view of the present state of the church and the world, by opening and committing to them the treasure of the Gospel, and by constraining them sweetly and powerfully to enter upon this great work at God’s command.¹⁷

Paul described the blessing of a God-called, heaven sent preacher of the Gospel. We read in Romans 10:17, “As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7, which reads, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” The context of Isaiah 52 is the good news that God was restoring His people from the Babylonian captivity, purposing to pardon them through the work of the Suffering Servant of the Lord whom He would send to save them from their sins. Paul is declaring that this prophecy has been and is being fulfilled by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The use of the word “feet” underscores the sending and going of those proclaiming the message of good news. Paul has altered the OT text from the singular (one who proclaims the good news) to the plural (those who proclaim good news), indicating that the fulfillment of Isaiah has been accomplished through the preaching of the gospel by apostolic messengers. The inclusion of this verse is not motivated by a desire to vindicate Paul’s apostleship. Instead, the intention is to stress that the prophecy from Isaiah has been fulfilled. The messengers have been sent out, the good news is being preached, the return from exile is at hand, and thus salvation is now available to both Jews and Gentiles.¹⁸

The great need of our nation and our churches is that the Lord send faithful preachers of the Word of God who will not compromise or selectively choose what is proclaimed to the people. The whole counsel of God needs to be proclaimed openly, publicly, and faithfully. Our Lord Jesus Himself declared, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2).

¹⁵ Alvah Hovey, *A Memoir of the Life and Times of Isaac Backus* (Gano Books, 1991), p. 62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 569. I left off some parenthetical references in this quote in which he cited other scholars to substantiate his assertions.