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Romans

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. Romans 10:12

The NKJV, along with a few other translations, chose the word "distinction" for this verse. Some use "difference." Although similar in intent, the word "distinction" is probably a better choice in order to avoid confusion. Jews and Gentiles are different; the very naming of them in this verse implies a difference - one which continues throughout the New Testament. However, in both Jew and Greek concerning matters of sin and salvation, there is no distinction.

Concerning sin, Paul has clearly shown that all are bound under sin's power, control, and thus - penalty -

"What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin." Romans 3:9

And so, all require the same mercy and deliverance from sin.

Concerning salvation, he has shown that the law could save no one because they were unable to meet its requirements fully. As the law was meant for the Jews, then this must (and in fact is shown to) mean that both Jew and Gentile are bound under the same plan of salvation - those under the law and those who were not under the law. As Paul noted in 10:4 (roger that!) -

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Jesus Christ is relevant to both Jew and Greek in regards to salvation and none may be saved apart from Him. The consequences of sin and the ineffectiveness of the law are highlighted in Scripture to take us by the hand and lead us directly to the throne of grace where Christ Jesus sits. In Him is found the freedom which grants both pardon from sin and justification before God for all men, "for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him."

There is one plan from God which is all-inclusive and it involves the "same Lord" for all. As is noted in 1 Corinthians 8:6 - "yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live."

And this same "Lord over all is rich to all..." The verb "is rich" indicates wealth and is the same general thought as the adjective used in Ephesians 2:6 - "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us..." The sense is that God has a superabundance of His graces which flow to His people, "to all who call upon Him." This final portion of the verse eliminates this mercy being bestowed upon non-believers as many claim. It is an infinite source of richness, but it is limited in its directional flow.

Life application: God isn't "doing something behind the scenes" for those who have never called on Jesus. He doesn't have a secondary plan of salvation, nor does He favor one group above another. The lines are set and they are found only in Christ. One is either "in Christ" or not "in Christ." It's an important message for the people of the world. Let's be sure to speak clearly about it. For those who call on Him, the richness of the glory of God will be an eternal delight.

For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:13

Romans 10:13 should be a memory-verse for you. When speaking to others about the Lord, it is simple, concise, and reveals the heart of the gospel. It is an abbreviated form of Romans 10:9 which said -

"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

There is nothing lacking in Romans 10:13 when compared to Romans 10:9. Only a simpleton would call on a dead Lord. Calling on the name of the Lord implies that one is calling on the risen Savior, Jesus. And so Paul begins with "For..." This is an explanatory phrase which should be taken in the entire context of the current paragraph. This is now the fourth time in a row Paul has used this connector -

"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" Romans 10:9-13

The first "for" explains the confession and belief; the second "for" explains the righteousness leading to salvation; the third "for" refers back to Paul's discourse on the Jewish state before God and then ties it in with the plan of righteousness, which is for all people; the last "for" reaffirms what was said in Romans 10:9, explaining that "whoever" truly means "whoever."

And so we don't miss what God is doing, Paul cites Joel 2:23, an Old Testament passage which is referring to "Jehovah" -

"And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the Lord
Shall be saved." Joel 2:23

By citing this verse, he has made the obvious connection between "Jehovah" and "Jesus"; the two are the same. And his use of Joel 2:23 isn't without precedent. Peter cited the same verse in the same manner in Acts 2:21. The incredible aspect of this isn't that Jesus is, in fact, Jehovah. The inconceivable point is that so many deny this obvious truth. Either it is so, or the Old Testament pictures given by God were downright misleading, and the New Testament applications by the apostles are false misrepresentations of who Jesus is.

But when one grasps this premise, then the Bible fits beautifully into an amazing picture of God's love for His people -

Whoever - unlimited in scope. Any person, anywhere, any color, any language, any background.

Calls - the limiting factor for "whoever." One must actually exercise their faith, calling out from their wretched state in petition to God.

On the name - The Bible's concept of a "name" is that of identification with the person or entity. Thus, for example, when Abram and Sarai's identification changed, their names were changed to reflect what had occurred. They became Abraham and Sarah.

Of the Lord - Only when one understands who the "Lord" is from Joel 2:23 can they appreciate what Paul is stating. "Lord" in that passage is the tetragrammaton, the four-letter designation for "Jehovah." Calling on the "name of Jehovah" is then to identify with who Jehovah is. This concept is found in Proverbs 18:10 -

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous run to it and are safe."

Because Paul is speaking of Jesus (verse 9), then with clarity of mind we can know that Jesus is the incarnation of "Jehovah." He is the God/Man and we are to call on Him as Lord.

Will be saved - Going to heaven isn't the purpose of being saved. Going to heaven is a result of being saved. Being saved implies "from" something. God's wrath is upon the people of the world because of sin. Jesus came to rectify this. By fulfilling the law and shedding his blood for our atonement, salvation from God's wrath is now available to all who, by faith, call on Him as Lord.

Life application: Take time to memorize Romans 10:13. Think on it and be able to explain the "who", "what", "why", and "how" of what this verse reveals. The "when" isn't stated, but it's anytime during this walk. As we don't know our last day, it shouldn't be a delayed "when." Share the gospel with the urgency of a soldier on a battlefield.

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Romans 10:14

We have just seen that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek in the need for and means of salvation. The Lord is rich to both Jew and Greek in that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Understanding this, Paul will now demonstrate, in logical sequence, how the plan of salvation is relayed. From this chain of thought he will redirect to how Israel's unbelief is not due to a lack of the plan, but is due to a failure to acknowledge it.

The sequence of questions given by Paul can be interpreted in a couple ways. One way is that Paul is stating them as objections to his previous argument. In essence, "How can we be blamed for not responding to the call when the call hasn't been provided?" This view of these questions is held by the noted scholar Albert Barnes. As Barnes states - "... the ground of injustice which a Jew would complain of, would be, that the plan made salvation dependent on faith, when a large part of the nation had not heard the gospel, and had had no opportunity to know it."

Another way of viewing these questions is that Paul is rhetorically asking them in order to stimulate action. In essence, "You have heard that all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved, but how can this come about without them hearing the message." This is the more common interpretation of these questions. Rather than being a defense at a trial they are an impetus to share the good news.

Be assured, the "defense" view is used by people all around the world, Jew and Gentile alike, to demonstrate that it is unfair to condemn people who haven't heard the gospel. And so Barnes is right in how these questions could be used. In answer, one doesn't need the gospel in order to be condemned - all people are already condemned (see John 3:18); one needs the gospel in order to be saved. Therefore, there is no unfairness in God. The gospel message is grace. Grace, by its very nature, is undeserved. The defense view cannot stand when presented to God.

The "stimulate to action" view is also used, and rightly so, by those who understand the need to share the gospel. If the "defense view" is actually a non-starter, then it is incumbent on believers to get the word out because it is God's avenue for it to be transmitted; and so it is. The Great Commission was stated explicitly by the Lord in several ways. These can be found in Matthew 28:19, 20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-47, John 20:21, and at the ascension in Acts 1:8.

This commission then is given so that salvation may be realized in both Jew and Gentile. It is a message without favoritism, but rather one that is given for "whoever calls on the name of the Lord." But...

1) "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" Paul's first obvious question. Man has the knowledge of God already ingrained in him. This is evident from the discussion in Romans 1 and also from such passages as Psalm 19:1-3 -

The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.

However, this knowledge is natural revelation and is merely sufficient to condemn man. God's word, the message of Christ, is specific revelation. It is sufficient to bring man to salvation. But being specific, it is not universally known. It must be transmitted in order to be believed. How can man call on the Lord if they haven't believed in Him? The answer is, he cannot. And so more is needed.

2) "And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" If calling on the Lord presupposes belief ("belief" implies a heart acceptance and not just a mental assertion), then how can that belief be realized if one doesn't hear the word of faith? It cannot happen. No one can believe in the existence of a green dribackle bug because no one has ever heard of such a thing. Proper belief that such a bug exists must be grounded in a truthful message based on true evidence. And the gospel message is no different. How can someone accept the gospel if the gospel has never been presented to them? The answer is, he cannot. And so more is needed.

3) "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" One cannot hear a message unless there is another to transmit the message. Words do not generate themselves, either in oral or in written format. They must have a source in order for them to come about. And so the gospel cannot go forth without someone to share it. This rhetorical question then needs to be taken to heart by every saved person who cares about the lost. In the ultimate sense, each person who speaks the gospel is a preacher and someone must preach in order for the message to be heard. But there is also a truth that not everyone is actually a preacher. The next verse will deal with that then.

Life application: No one will have a sound defense at their trial of condemnation, but those who call on the Lord have a certain hope; a pardon for their offenses against the holy God. How can we turn a blind eye to those who so desperately need to hear the Good News found in Jesus Christ?

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

**"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15**

Paul's progression of thought concerning the transmission of the gospel continues with, "And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" Everyone who is a saved believer should be a voice and a witness for the good news. However, the truth is that just as not everyone has plumbing skills, not everyone has sound communication skills. Because of this, certain people are more effective at relaying the message than others. Even though this is so, there is also the axiom that "You can preach with your person or you can preach with your purse."

Everyone who believes the truth of the gospel certainly has some ability to promote the gospel, even the poor widow who can give but two mites. A preacher can't preach unless he is sent and someone has to be willing to send him. It is difficult to comprehend those who attend church, week after week, and who don't support their preacher and the ministry. They are benefitting from his schooling, preparation, and life-blood and yet they take without giving. Missions

cannot go forward without missionary funding. Teachers who teach should be supported for their time and effort. These are obvious truths which are often simply disregarded.

In today's world, there are means of spreading instruction to even wider audiences - Websites, email, You Tube, Facebook, etc. are all means of sharing and receiving instruction. How many sit and absorb volumes of information by these avenues and yet never return with a gift of gratitude to the one who put forth the effort, time, and expense of preparation and transmission?

Paul notes the needed care for teachers several times. In Galatians 6:6, he states, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches." In 1 Timothy 5:18, while citing the law, he repeats, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." And Jesus, using the same thought said this to the disciples He had sent out, "...a worker is worthy of his food." Matthew 10:10

One final thought on being "sent." There must be a divine commission on the sender. There are many preachers and teachers and yet their doctrine doesn't correspond with, or properly handle, God's word. A divine commission will be seen for what it is when it rightly divides the word of truth. It must be centered on the Person and work of Jesus Christ and it must cling to and boast in His cross. The cross is the central point of the faith and yet it is often dismissed in an attempt to not offend. But the resurrection wasn't possible without His death. When evaluating preachers and teachers, never fail to evaluate them based on the message of the cross.

After communicating the need for preachers to be sent, and in support of this thought, Paul cites Isaiah 52:7 (and which is also a verse found in Nahum 1:15). "As it is written" shows that what he is saying finds its support within the Hebrew Scriptures and will now find its fulfillment in the New Testament church. "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace..."

Paul equates Isaiah's words directly to the good news of the gospel. Isaiah was speaking of the affliction and bondage of the people during their times of captivity. But he spoke of a time of release from those things, a time when the Lord would comfort His people. After his introduction, Isaiah moved into His "suffering Servant" passage which spans 52:13 - 53:12. These verses detail the coming abasement and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, the good news.

It is those feet which proclaim this wondrous message which are termed "beautiful." It is the faithful preacher of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord who truly brings "glad tidings of good things!" It should be noted that a bearer of news in his day would have traveled long distances carrying his message. For example, if he were at a battle line, he would be instructed to run to the king or to the high priest with how things were going.

Such a herald would wear the lightest shoes possible, probably open sandals. He may even run barefoot if his feet were calloused enough. By the time he reached the one he was heading for, the herald's feet would be filthy. They would bear the dust and possibly even the open wounds of the run. But the beauty of the feet was in the message, not the feet themselves. The feet which labored so vigorously would be considered as lovely as a spring flower to the one who received the good news.

And such is the case with the preachers and missionaries who rightly profess the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their feet would appear as precious as the finest gold, and even more so.

Life application: A showy message by a fashionably dressed orator is worthless when placed side by side with a herald of the gospel who is dressed in old clothes and worn out shoes. Be sure to tend to those who instruct you with gifts and notes of appreciation. The Word of God is the most precious treasure we have; don't withhold your gratitude for those who transmit it.