

**Romans 10:14-17 (NKJV)**

**14 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?**

**15 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!"**

**16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"**

**17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

The first thing we need to look at this morning is the **flow of thought** in our passage. Most of the mistakes I have made in interpretation are a result of separating the text from its context. I have become confused about **the single point** the author is trying to make? What was he saying?

So let's look at this.

Remember that Paul is addressing 2 difficulties in chapter 10. The points are:

1. The Jews were wrong about the way of salvation. And
2. The gospel was being preached to the gentiles.

Paul's first answer to the **first difficulty** is that **whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**. Now Paul is dealing with **the second question**. How does anyone, Jew or Gentile, get to **become** one of those "whosoever's" that can be saved? What makes a person do that? How does it happen?

So Paul provides two answers in our text this morning. First is that a person becomes one of these "**whosoever's**" by the **preaching of the gospel**. They have got to hear the gospel. Their ears must be exposed to the proper message. We see this in verses 14 and 15.

This is the external call. This is the words of Christ being put out by someone in the know.

But that is only the first part. Paul then makes it clear that not everyone **responds** to that message appropriately. So the **second part** is that the Word of Christ is made **effective** to those who believe. This is the **effectual call** or the **efficacious call**. Verses 16 and 17 describe the supernatural work of God applying the external call in an internal manner, a supernatural manner. This is something only God can do.

Now, we need to ask a question before we go farther. Is this passage describing the only way a person can be saved? Or is it describing the way that God uses most often and most effectively?

I think we have got to say that this is the way God uses most effectively. Why is that? Why would I think that?

Well, Diane's testimony is largely based on reading a tract. RC Sproul read some uncommon text in scripture and was saved. We have all probably read many testimonies that did not involve a response to preaching. So that is the main proof to me that this passage is describing God's most common way of bringing people to himself.

And then we have the question of what happens to babies and to people who have never encountered the gospel. They are both in pretty much the same boat. They are all born in Adam. They are all in a state of lostness apart from the work of God. And none of them have heard the gospel preached.

At this point we don't have a whole lot of scripture that clearly tells us what God will do. But we do have a scripture that tells us that even before they were born, **Jacob was chosen** and **Esau was not**. And it was not based on anything they ever did or said or decided. I believe we are safe in resting firmly upon the character of God and believing that He will be as gracious and loving toward His chosen **in those situations** as He will to us who have had an opportunity to respond to His call. We have got to believe that everyone who is ever saved is saved in the same way. They respond at some point in time to the call of God upon their lives. They receive what Christ did for them as their only way of being right with God. God does not reveal everything about his plan. Many things are a mystery to us. I think this is one of those things. But I firmly believe we can rest upon His goodness and kindness. And that is good enough for me.

I'd like to use a quote from John Stott to lay out the gist of this passage. He says that "the **essence** of Paul's argument is seen if we put his six verbs in opposite order. **Christ sends heralds. Heralds preach. People hear. Hearers believe. Believers call. And those who call are saved.** The relentless logic of Paul's case for evangelism is felt most forcibly when the stages are stated negatively and each is seen to be essential to the next."

I think Mr. Stott states very clearly what is happening here. Paul is laying out the essentials for the gospel to be responded to.

So how do most people become one of these "**whosoever**" who are saved?

Most people who are saved hear the gospel proclaimed by a preacher that was sent out to do such a thing. Something happens in their hearts and they believe. Upon believing they call upon Christ to save them. And they are saved.

**Romans 10:14-17 (NKJV)**

**14 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?**

The then in verse 14 connects us to the passage before it and tells us that this is indeed the continuation of thought we mentioned earlier. Paul is building one thought upon another.

Notice in this verse the importance of the phrase **“in Him”**. How shall they believe in Him? It is important to remember that Christianity is not some religion with all its creeds and rituals. No, Christianity is about the person and work of Christ. A person doesn't join the church like he joins the rotary club. It isn't some set of ideals that he ascribes to. No, **the only reason to join a church is because you met the head of the church and called out to Him for salvation**. The church is all about Christ, not a creed, not an agenda, not a ritual. It is about a relationship with Him, Jesus Christ, the head of the church. Notice too how important the proper message is. The message is vital to the work of winning the whosoever.

Never buy into this idea of the sovereignty of God that says that God will save whoever he wants to save and it is all of His choice. Therefore we do not need to preach the gospel at all. You will never find that in the pages of scripture. That comes out of men who pride themselves in their own wisdom. Preaching is an ordained activity that is to be used in the process that God uses to bring people to Himself.

Have you ever considered that God could make it so that when you swallow the seed of a corn that it could turn to a whole ear in your stomach. He could completely bypass the normal process of planting corn, letting it grow, and then picking it. He could do this. I think we would all agree on this. His omnipotence makes this true beyond question. But none of us really thinks that **He will** do such a thing. Well, God has chosen for His own reasons to use many of our slow natural processes to be instruments in carrying out His will. God **could** plant thoughts in people's minds without preaching. He could just **download** the idea. I think we would all agree that He **could**. But He doesn't. Why? Well we really don't know for sure. But I would guess it is because it is

to His glory for us to **participate** in the process. If we share in the work we will certainly share more in the rejoicing as people come into the Kingdom.

Now see where it says, How shall they hear without a preacher? There are two words normally used for preaching.

In Acts 8:4,5 both words are used.

**Acts 8:4-5 (NKJV)**

**4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.**

**5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.**

The word used in verse 4 is the word that we get our word evangelize from. It means to **report the good news**. The focus of the word is upon **the character of the message**.

The word used in verse 5 however has a different focus. The word used for preach in verse 5 means **herald**. The focus isn't so much on the **message** being proclaimed but it is on the **method** of its proclamation. It focuses on the fact that there is someone standing up and giving a message. The focus is on the message and proclaimer together.

The word for preacher in our text is the second word. It is the **herald** word. So the focus is on both the message and its method of proclamation. It is by a herald.

Then as we go on to verse 15 we see more of Paul's meaning. He says **15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?**

Now we see a lot in scripture about being sent.

In our culture we think that we can put out a shingle, start a Christian organization of one form or the other, and we think that somehow God should bless this. But He reveals another method in scripture. There are no clear examples of people independently starting their own outreaches. When we see a ministry being established we see 2 things. First we see the church leadership coming together to determine if this ministry should be done, and if so, who should do it. At the same time we often see God moving upon a person, or people's hearts that they should be part of this ministry.

That appears to be what Paul is talking about in this text.

The beauty of a church sending a preacher is that this church is, in essence, endorsing this person to do this ministry. There is **accountability**. The senders know the character of the person they are sending. People like Jim Jones and other cult leaders don't **get** sent. They send **themselves**. And the people who flock to those groups have great reason for concern. There is no

safety. There is no accountability, no endorsement. No authority to appeal to for correction. When someone is **sent**, they come with a **message** that has already been agreed upon and endorsed. Also the person or people being sent are **already submitted to an authority**.

A called preacher is something that is addressed in scripture. Brad and I and Mike used to talk about this every now and then. Mike would sometimes have doubts about his calling. Brad and I never doubted that he was called to preach.

One of the things that Spurgeon and Barnhouse both mention in regard to this text is that it is often difficult for a called person to be certain of his calling. The best test, they say, is to try to do something different. Try to avoid the calling. In fact, do not **do that ministry** unless you can do nothing else. They both said that if you are **called** to a ministry, you will not be able to avoid it. I cannot stand before you and tell you that I am certain of being called by God to do this. But I can tell you that as, for now, I can do nothing else.

One of the things you can see from this text is just how important preaching is to God. As we said earlier, preaching is the primary means God uses in filling His family. I have often heard people tell me they prefer other means, other venues. They would prefer to read a book or the Bible or just go out in nature to be with God. But Paul doesn't hesitate to convey what God's favorite method of getting to a person's heart is. We would do well to keep that in mind as we are considering alternatives. You see, when we are reading a book, we can put it on the shelf when we hit parts we don't like. When we walk into the woods, we carry only our agenda with us. But when someone comes to preach, their message will go where it will and we cannot manipulate it. We cannot stop it. And God often uses that process to convict us of our need. So remember, God normally uses preaching to win people to Himself.

Also this is **not to say** that only called people should be evangelizing. No. We are all called to share our faith with people around us. We all need to be keenly aware of the opportunities we have to witness to those who are lost. All that I am trying to say is that I believe the text is talking about the preaching of called ministers who are sent by Christ through His church.

**15 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!"**

This passage is one that is at the heart of many missions agencies. And rightfully so. The sending that was done in the New Testament was very intentional. And while Paul's ministry, for example, evidently wasn't fully supported by the home church, it certainly was partially funded by it. The sending party took some responsibility for the funding of the project.

The passage quoted here by Paul is from Isaiah 52:7

Here is the full quote:

**7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"**

This passage was a prophesy prior to Israel being dragged into the Babylon captivity. The prophesy foretells their release from bondage and their return to the promised land. It is used here by Paul obviously referring to a much greater release from bondage. It is the freedom from the bondage of sin and death.

Think of the joy that is being conveyed in this passage in its literal reference. Here are the people of Israel after being held in slavery for years and years finally released. They are free to go out and serve God as they chose. What a day of rejoicing that would be. What a wonderful opportunity to deliver that message. What a great blessing it would be to hear that message.

Well that is nothing compared to us hearing the Gospel message. We have freedom from bondage in its most spiritual sense. We, who were in bondage to sin all our lives, are suddenly and completely free. We no longer must live as we did. There is no longer any judgment over our heads. We are only looking at the blessing of God forever.

How could this message be received with anything but joy?

You know, the false gospels don't have this affect. Every false gospel leaves it up to us to accomplish something. We need to **"put out"** in some way. Maybe it leaves us thinking we need to be better. We need to be more moral. We need to turn over a new leaf. We need to achieve some standard. We could go on and on. But none of the false gospels will deliver **this kind** of gladness. It won't provide this kind of **wondrously good news**. Only the **true** gospel could do such a thing because it isn't about what **we** must do. It is about what **Christ has already done**.

You see, what we have here is a test as to whether we have really understood the gospel. When we hear it, does it fill our hearts with joy? Do we rejoice to know that our sins penalty has been truly and fully paid by Christ? Are we happy to know that nothing can separate us from His love. We, of all people, have a guaranteed retirement plan fully paid for and fully taken care of by Christ. We will live in a retirement community that requires no security cameras or medical services. We will live in perfect peace and contentment with each other and with Christ. We will get to be with our loved ones forever. And this is all **real**. It is all more true than the most true thing about this life.

That is what the messenger who is cresting the hill is telling us. If our hearts are not filled with joy, we have not understood the gospel. This is the gospel of peace. Christ has brought us peace with Him, peace with ourselves and peace with each other.... eventually perfect peace. And the good things that are mentioned. They are all the things that are ours as a result of the gospel. Essentially what this verse is talking about is what we have learned up until now about the breadth and depth of the gospel.

This verse paints a pictures that says when we want to kiss the feet of the person who first gave us this good news, then we are getting the point of just what a blessing that message is.

Ask yourself this morning, is that how you feel about the gospel. If you understand it.... If you truly understand it, that is the effect it will have in your heart. You cannot help, even in light of your current circumstances, to be glad. With that said, how much of that kind of joy is in this church today? How much do we revel in the goodness of the good news. When we hear the simple gospel proclaimed, does our heart leap for joy? If we really understand the gospel and if we really love Christ, this is the effect it will have. We should ask this morning, does it have that effect in my life?

### **16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"**

OK, So Paul has laid out how a person becomes **"the whosoever"** he spoke of earlier.

They believe the message from the sent preacher and call out to God for salvation. They are overjoyed by the glad message they received. They cannot help but be overjoyed.

But does this describe everyone's reaction? Obviously not. Not everyone responds to the gospel with saving faith. And is that a shock? Is it something that

the Jewish person should be aghast about? Not if they read their own scripture. God already told them through Isaiah that disbelief is a typical response. The question is not who **HASN'T** believed our report. No. It is just the opposite. It is **who has?** **Most** people did not believe the truth they heard. That is par for the course beginning with Eve through the judges and the prophets. It is typical for people, even Jewish people, to disbelieve the words of God. And the problem isn't that people could not **understand** the report. The prophet didn't ask Lord who has **understood it**. The report is simple. **Anyone** can understand it. But they simply will not believe it.

Notice too how it says they have not all OBEYED the gospel.

This is the **second test** to see if you have saving faith. The first test is to ask the question, does the gospel make me glad? Do I receive it as joyful news, news that thrills my soul?

Now the second test is do I **obey** the gospel?

You see, not all hearing leads to faith. When Isaiah asks who has believed my report the assumption is that many have heard but only few have believed. Such is the case with the gospel as well. Only some respond with true faith. Only some respond by obeying the gospel.

True faith is way more than agreeing with the facts. It must consist of at least that, but it is much more. James tells us that faith without works is dead. It really isn't faith at all. It has no life in it. Faith is always born with its own energy. Faith always produces actions and results. It is impossible for it **not** to do so.

True faith always responds by conforming to the will of God. We may resist temporarily at some points. But eventually faith will overcome and we will obey. The first obediences of the gospel involve **repenting**, turning from our **known sin** and **believing in Christ**. Then we will be **baptized**. But if we have been given true faith our obedience won't end there. We will continue on in submitting to the known will of God. We will never do that perfectly in this life. But we **most certainly** will do it. And this obedience will be an evidence that the miracle of faith has happened in us. We simply can never accept any doctrine that does not carry faith and obedience in close fellowship. Run from a doctrine like that because it is a doctrine of demons. True faith obeys the Gospel.

### **17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

In this passage the word of God is more likely the word of Christ. It seems that is the better translation.

Maybe the best translation would be:



So then faith comes out of what is heard and what is heard comes through the Word about Christ.

So at the end of the day, how does a person become one of these whosoever?

Well it starts with hearing. But it is more than mechanical hearing. It has to be accompanied with a supernatural power of faith. And that power causes a person to hear the word of Christ, the gospel that saves a person, truly hears it, and that person is never the same. They respond to that message with their newfound faith.

This is also a truth that is important for our day to day living. Our faith always feeds on the word of Christ, the truth about Christ, and upon the person of Christ. If you want your faith to stagnate, rob it of the truth of Christ. Don't read about Christ. Don't think about Christ. Don't pray to Christ.

If you want your faith to grow, feed it on Christ. Read His word. Meditate on what you know to be true about Him. Pray to Him.

And as a further application of this text this morning we should ask ourselves- how do I respond to the gospel? Is it glad tidings to me? Is it the best news I can receive on any given day? Does it truly thrill my soul. If not, why not? Have our hearts become cold? Have we lost our focus? Have we lost our first love? If so we need to call out to God. We need to repent of this coldness and ask Him to change our hearts. He surely will if we ask. That is surely His will. And secondly we should ask, do I obey the Gospel? And as an extension, do I obey God? Am I committed to doing only what He says? Will I drop all my expectations and all the things we define as needs when it crosses His clear commands or principles? True believers obey the gospel.