

GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Romans 10:1-21

Key Verse: 10:9

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

In the last passage we learned God's sovereignty in world mission. God, in his one-sided mercy, chose his Son Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world. Through Jesus, God calls undeserving sinners to be his children. God forgives our sins and makes us his servants. We who have received Christ must realize that we are chosen by God to receive his mercy. Let's thank God for choosing us. Let's ask God to choose many young Americans as his servants.

In chapter 10, Paul explains how God works in his redemptive history. God works through the preaching of his message to the world. The message is: Jesus is Christ the Lord. Those who believe this message are saved. Those who reject this message are not saved. May God help us to believe the message and proclaim it to others.

First, Christ is the end of the law (1-4).

Look at verse 1. “Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.” Again, Paul reveals his broken shepherd's heart for the Israelites. Paul knew that they were not right with God and they needed salvation. Paul understood them from his own experience. Look at verse 2. “For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.” They were indeed zealous for God. They were willing to ride over land and sea to win a single convert (Mt 23:15). They were so zealous in tithing that they even gave a tenth of their spices, such as dill, mint and cummin (Mt 23:23). The Israelites' zeal for God was commendable. The problem was that their zeal was not based on knowledge. Here “knowledge” means the main point of the whole Bible, that is, God's world salvation purpose. When God chose Abraham, he promised to make him a blessing so that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him (Gen 12:1-3). But the Jews missed the whole point, and served God in their own way. Jesus told a parable about a typical Jew of the time. He stood up and prayed about himself: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men...or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get” (Lk 18:11,12). This man thought he was doing God's work. But he was only claiming his self-righteousness. When Paul was Saul, he thought he was doing the work of God when he was persecuting the church of God (Ac 8:1-3). In fact, he was working for his selfish ambition. Paul was for years a zealot in a tragically mistaken cause.

Here we learn that we must work for God based on Bible knowledge. Once Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. Afterwards, Jesus talked about spiritual bread from heaven. Then most of them left Jesus, grumbling. Jesus was sorry to see them leave. So he asked the Twelve, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” “Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God’” (Jn 6:67-69). Peter followed Jesus, not with his human zeal, but with the clear knowledge of who Jesus was.

The Jews claimed that they were righteous because they kept the law. But Romans 3:10 says: “There is no one righteous, not even one...” The Jews' real problem was that they were too proud to submit to the righteousness of God; they were too proud to come to God, humbling themselves. The righteousness of God is Jesus Christ (Ro 3:21-26). Paul proclaims that Christ is the end of the law, and through him everyone can obtain righteousness by faith. Look at verse 4. “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”

Second, the importance of making a confession (5-13).

As Moses taught, men can obtain righteousness when they fulfill all the requirements of the law (5). The Jews knew they could not keep all the requirements of the law. So they should have admitted that they were sinners. They should have accepted Jesus' grace and mercy. Instead, they claimed the gospel did not make sense. They assumed that no one could complete the gospel work, saying: “Who will ascend into heaven to bring Christ down? Who will descend into the deep to bring Christ up?” (6,7) Their real problem was that the way of salvation did not look

beneficial to them. In their desperate struggle to survive, it seemed abstract and impractical. Sometimes, we are like them.

Then how can we believe? We must humbly listen to the word of God, simply because God says so. Look at verse 8. "But what does it say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming..." Contrary to the Jews' thought, God is not far away from us; God is right here with us. We can believe God and his words when we believe with all our heart. We can believe the word of faith when we are willing to obey the word (Dt 30:14).

Look at verse 9. "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." In this verse we learn what the key point of our faith should be: "Jesus is Christ the Lord." Jesus became Christ the Lord through his death and resurrection. We must believe this key point of our faith and confess it (Ac 10:39-43). Why do we have to confess this faith with our mouth? It is because this confession is the beginning of a personal relationship with Christ. Jesus taught the importance of this confession. A woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years touched Jesus' cloak, thinking, "If I just touch his cloak I will be healed." According to her faith, she was instantly healed and wanted to steal away silently. But Jesus did not let her. He insisted that she come forward until she came, trembling, and told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (Lk 8:45-48). When she confessed what Jesus had done for her, she became a daughter of God.

At the outset of his earthly Messianic ministry, Jesus chose the Twelve and revealed to them that he was the Son of the living God. When they had seen enough evidence, Jesus asked them, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ" (Mt 16:15-17). We call it, "the confession of faith." Jesus helped his disciples make a confession of faith as of first importance. This confession is crucial to discipleship. Peter had many ups and downs in his life of faith, but because of his confession of faith he was able to follow Jesus to the end.

A confession of faith and a confession of love are basically the same. After the resurrection, Jesus visited Peter on the seashore where he met him first. Jesus cooked breakfast for him and his friends. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" Jesus asked him the same question three times. Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the same question, "Do you love me?" again and again (Jn 21:15-17). Jesus was serious in helping Peter make a love confession. Jesus wants us to openly confess our love and loyalty to him. It is also a declaration to the world that we are on the side of Jesus Christ, citizens of the kingdom of God. Verse 10 says, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

A confession of faith is also the best way of witnessing Jesus Christ to others. It is good for us, in witnessing to others, to share how we accepted Jesus as our personal Savior. But it is far better to proclaim, "Jesus is Christ the Lord," clearly and with conviction (Ac 2:36,38). Paul is a good example of this. He said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household" (Ac 16:31). In this part, Paul teaches us that our message should be: "Jesus is Christ the Lord." 1 Peter 3:15 says: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

Look at verse 11. "As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'" When we trust in the things of the world, we may soon be dismayed, because there is nothing in the world which will not perish, spoil or fade away (1 Pe 1:4). Jesus is the only way. Isaiah prophesied about Jesus, "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed" (Isa 28:16). It is true. When we trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit convinces us that God loves us and that we are freely justified to be righteous children of God (Ro 5:5). The Holy Spirit also convinces us that God is good. Romans 8:28 says: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." All mankind can have salvation in Jesus. Look at verses 12,13. "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

Third, the necessity of missionary calling (14,15).

Look at verses 14,15. "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" In spreading his message, God does not work all by himself; he co-works together with his people. God called Israel as a priestly nation. God wanted to make the Holy Jerusalem the Bible center of the whole world. Contrary to his wishes, Jerusalem was filled with fearful people and corrupted people. God called Isaiah to proclaim the message of God (Isa 6:8). Isaiah thought that he was too sinful to be a missionary. Then God cleansed his unclean lips and sent him out. God also called Jeremiah. At first, he refused God's calling, saying, "I am only a child." But God sent him anyway to proclaim the message of God to his people (Jer 1:6).

Once Jesus talked with a Samaritan woman who had a sinful past. She found in Jesus living water welling up to eternal life--and the Messiah of the world. After meeting Jesus, she testified about Jesus to her townspeople. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (Jn 4:35b). Jesus had world mission vision through this one Samaritan woman. Praise Jesus! Jesus' disciples had no idea about the missionary calling. Anyway Jesus trained them to be future missionaries. Mark 6:7 says, "Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits." Another time, Jesus appointed the 72 and sent them out for missionary training (Lk 10:1).

The Antioch church was the first Gentile church in history. Barnabas and Paul were the key members of the Antioch church. It seemed that without them, the Gentile church would fall apart. One day while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Ac 13:2). It seemed that the church could not spare Barnabas and Saul. But they decided to obey the missionary calling from above. Acts 13:3 says, "So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."

Jesus gave us the world mission command. Matthew 28:19,20 says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." We Christians must obey this missionary calling. Those who do so are truly beautiful. Look at verse 15b. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Fourth, the gospel message goes out to all nations (16-21).

Until now, Paul talked about the missionary calling. In verses 16-21, Paul tells us that God spreads the gospel message not only through his messengers, but also by his own power and wisdom. Some can assume that the Israelites could not believe because they did not hear the message. But Paul says they heard the message (16). For example, in Isaiah chapter 53 Isaiah prophesied concerning the suffering and death of Jesus. Isaiah 53:1 says, "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" This verse expresses the painful heart of God's people regarding the Messiah's suffering and death for the sin of the world. This verse also indicates that all the earth will hear the message of his suffering and death. In the history of Israel, there was probably no one who did not memorize Isaiah chapter 53. So to Paul, all the people of Israel heard the message of the gospel. But not all of them accepted the good news.

Did the Gentile world hear the gospel message? Yes! They heard the gospel message. Look at verse 18. "But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.'" Paul asserts that all the Gentiles heard the gospel message. Look at verse 19. "Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, 'I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.'" This verse is a quotation from Deuteronomy 32, the song of Moses. In his last days, Moses praised the greatness of God. At the same time, Moses was sorry for his people's frequent disobedience to God and for their idol worship, which came when they envied the cultural development of world power nations. But Moses saw that the Gentile people would come to know God through his people Israel, anyway. Moses praised God, for the Lord was made known to the Gentiles, even though his people were angry when the Gentiles came to know God. In effect, this would work for the good of the Israelites as well, motivating them to seek God. Look at verse 20. "And Isaiah boldly says, 'I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.'" How wonderful it is to know that Gentiles heard the gospel message by God's sovereign wisdom and power.

Nevertheless, God's heart is still broken for his people Israel. God never gave up on them. God cares for them with tenderness and affection. Look at verse 21. "But concerning Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'" God is like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. He waits with open arms for his people to come back to him. Though they are rebellious and difficult, he never gives up on them. God is so patient. Praise God!

In today's passage, we learn that our message to a lost world should be: Jesus is Christ the Lord. Let's read verse 9. "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."