

GOD'S MESSAGE TO A LOST 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 previous chapter, we studied God's mission to a lost world. God, in his great mercy, made the world salvation plan to save men from their sins. For this, God chose Israel as a priestly nation. But they abandoned his holy mission. Still, God kept on doing his world salvation work through his remnants for many ages. Finally, God sent his one and only Son, as he had promised long ago. His people despised the Son of God and crucified him. But God raised him from the dead and made him Christ the Lord. Today's passage, Romans chapter 10, indoctrinates us to know what our message to a lost world should be: Jesus is Christ the Lord.

I. The Gospel message: Jesus is Christ the Lord (1-13)

First, zeal without knowledge (1-4). Look at verse 1. "Brothers, my heart's desire and [prayer to](#) God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." The Jews thought they were saved because they were physical descendants of Abraham. They thought they were saved because they worked for God zealously (2b). They were greatly mistaken. They thought they were saved because they kept the law meticulously, especially the law of the Sabbath. According to the Sabbath law, on the Sabbath day they did not turn the light on or off or lift anything which weighed more than 2 dried figs. They hired Gentiles to do these things. They gave a tenth of their earnings. They memorized the Torah day and night. Nevertheless, to Paul they were not saved. Their zeal for God was misdirected and misapplied.

Look at verse 2b. "...but their zeal is not based on knowledge." Their mistake came when their zeal was not based on knowledge. Here "knowledge" means the main point of the whole Bible, that is, God's world salvation purpose, first given to Abraham (Ge 12:1-3). God wanted to make Abraham a blessing so that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him. But the Jews missed the whole point, and served God in their own way. For example, there is a Jew who pictures the Jews of Jesus' 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. Caiaphas the high priest said, "...it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (Jn 11: 50b). He tempered his men to destroy Jesus because he was afraid of Jesus' popularity. 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). But he was not; he was only 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 5 loaves and 2 fish. Afterwards, Jesus talked about the 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 themselves 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). So Paul urges that Christ is the end of the law, and that through him everyone can obtain his 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). According to Moses, men can obtain the righteousness of God 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 were not righteous, but condemned. Nevertheless, they did not want to believe in the righteousness of God, Jesus Christ, so they made the gospel a sophistry. They assumed that no one could bring the gospel work to completion, 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 looked to them not beneficial at all. When they did not see practical benefits, they evaded the light of the Gospel. The same is true of us.

How, then, can we believe? 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 what the Jews thought, our 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 the key points of our faith and confess it (Ac 10:39-43). Why do we have to confess this faith with our mouth? It is because the confession of faith is the beginning point of our faith (Lk 8:45-48). As we know, a superficial confession is easy. Many say, "I love you," not knowing what love is. But a true confession of faith is not easy. One young woman married a man. She really wanted to hear her husband say, "I love you, honey." But he never made a love confession. So his wife asked him, "Why don't you ever say, I love you?" After a pause, he said bluntly, "Haven't we married?" His love confession was very legalistic.

At the outset of his earthly Messianic ministry, Jesus chose the Twelve and helped them open their spiritual eyes to see that he was the Son of the living God. When they grew enough spiritually to see who Jesus really was, 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 a matter of first importance. 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. He 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). Why was Jesus so serious to help Peter make a love confession until he was hurt? It is because a love confession is a matter of heart. It is also a declaration to the world that we are on the side of Jesus Christ, and that we are the citizens of the kingdom of God. Look at verse 10. "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," in all possible ways: this way or that way (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 clearly 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 to believe 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.'"

II. The Gospel messengers (14-21)

First, the necessity of missionary calling (14,15). These days missionary calling is in decay and disrepute. But when we study the Bible carefully, all God's people are supposed to be missionaries. Read verses 14,15. In these verses Paul urges missionary calling. Our 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 became the center of the fellowship of fearful people and corruption. 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. 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 she went away, Jesus made a remark, saying, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (Jn 4:35b). This is Jesus' poetic expression of world mission vision and missionary calling. Praise Jesus who saw world mission vision through one Samaritan woman. 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." On another occasion, Jesus appointed the 72 and sent them out for missionary training (Lk 10:1).

The Antioch church was the first Gentile church in church history. Barnabas and Paul were the key members of the Antioch church. Without them, the Gentile church would seem to 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). When they thought about the situation of the first Gentile church they could not send them off because they needed them there. 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." Christians who have no missionary calling have no part with God.

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." Missionary calling is truly beautiful. Look at verse 15b. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Second, the Gospel message goes out to all nations (16-21). Until now, Paul talked about the missionary calling. In this part, Paul tells us that God not only spreads the Gospel message through his messengers, but also God himself spreads the Gospel message 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 in the thought of the Messiah's suffering and death for the sin of the world. This verse also has the meaning that all the earth will hear the message of his suffering and death. In the history of Israel, probably there was no one who did not memorize Isaiah 53. So to Paul's logic, all the people of Israel heard the message of the Gospel. But they did not believe.

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, as a result of envying cultural achievements of world powers. But Moses saw the Gentile people come to know the name of God through his people,

anyway. Moses praised God, for the name of the Lord was made known to the Gentiles, even though his people were angry when the Gentiles came to know the name of God. Paul quotes Isaiah to say that the Gentile peoples were seeking the Savior God. The Magi from the east are a good example. 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.

Still, God cares for his people Israel. 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.

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."