



Good morning North Campus! My name is Neal Benson and I'm our Foster City Campus Pastor. Open your Bible to Romans 10. Today we are continuing our series in the book of Romans. If you remember, Romans 9-11 is a unique section in this letter. This entire section deals with one single question: How does Israel fit into God's plan? Romans 9 is about Israel's past, Romans 10 is about Israel's present, and Romans 11 is about Israel's future. Last week Mark did a great job explaining God's sovereignty and the doctrine of election found in Romans 9. We learned how God sovereignly chose Israel, this tiny nation, to be a witness to the entire world. Israel was designed to be a people who would bring hope and healing to the rest of the world. But when Christ came, instead of accepting Him, they rejected Him.

Now in chapter 10, we're going to look at Israel's present. Up to this point in the Bible the nation of Israel was the main story. But now the church is the main story. This is also one of the greatest missionary passages in the entire Bible. If Romans 9 is about God's sovereignty, then Romans 10 is about our part in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. You see, God isn't done with Israel yet. Next week in Romans 11 we'll look at God's plan to restore them.

As I've been reading over Romans 10 this week, I can't help but think about my good friend Andy. Andy and I have been friends for over 20 years. Andy knows all about my past and has seen the changes God made in my life, but as long as I can remember he has never been receptive to the Gospel. A couple of years ago we were having dinner together. It was great seeing my friend, but I could see in his face that he was hurting. I sat through the entire meal hoping for an opportunity to share the good news about Jesus with Andy. At the end of the meal, the opportunity came to share about the hope he could find in placing his faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord.

I was hoping and praying to lead Andy to Christ right there in Cheesecake Factory! After waiting a few seconds, Andy kindly responded, "I appreciate you not preaching to me, but the Jesus thing isn't for me." I pushed it a little more because I wasn't ready to give up, but it was clear that Andy wasn't ready to accept the Gospel. I left the dinner with mixed emotions. I was so thankful for our continued friendship, but I was heartbroken for my friend who was hurting so deeply.

Have you had an experience like this before, when you shared the Gospel and the person rejected Christ? Do you have a loved

one in your life who is far from Christ and it hurts you to see their pain? Have you shared your testimony of life change with someone, only to be dismissed? This is the situation God found Himself in with the nation of Israel. God had chosen this people to be His special possession. He lavished His love on them and saved them from a certain destruction, only to have them reject Him. As Paul writes to the church in Rome, he shares his hopes for Israel to re turn to a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved (Romans 10:1).

He expresses his fervent prayer and hope for his fellow Israelites to be saved. Isn't it true that when we are hopeful for a situation it encompasses our thoughts and prayers? This was also true for Paul. He was persistent in praying for his fellow Israelites to discover the salvation he has found.

Why Israel Should Know Better

Paul lists four reasons why Israel should have known better. The first reason is they were zealous without knowledge.

For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge (v. 2).

This was hard for Israel because their entire life revolved around religion. There is no one more zealous than a Hasidic Jew. Paul himself was extremely zealous for God also, so he personally knew about this. Paul went as far as killing Christians to express his commitment to God. But his zeal was lacking knowledge, just as the zeal of the Israelites is lacking knowledge. The proper word for zeal without knowledge is fanaticism. Fanatics are people who have a zeal and sincerity, but it's a zeal that refuses reflection on facts. They are sincere but they can do a lot of damage with their actions. Religion can never save you, no matter how zealous you are.

The second reason Israel should have known better is they tried to save themselves by good works.

Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (verses 3-4).

Israel sought to establish its own standard of righteousness by following the law. The Jews tried to save themselves by good works, and it didn't work.

A lot of good people make this same mistake today. They're trying to set up their own religion. Let me give you two examples. One of these is salvation by subtraction: Give up all your bad habits and you'll be a Christian. Stop drinking, smoking and swearing and you're good to go. The opposite is salvation by service. Go and serve the poor, help your neighbor on the weekend, work hard, and give lots of money away and you will be saved. These types of people are trying to establish their own standard just like Israel had done. Paul has already dealt with this earlier in the letter, back in chapters three and four. You can't be saved simply by being good.

The Israelites missed that Christ came as the culmination of the law. In the original language, culmination can mean end, fulfillment, or conclusion. The reason Christ terminated the law is so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. We've already talked about this, but if righteousness is by the law it is not by Christ and if it is by Christ, through faith, it is not by the law. I appreciate how Tim Keller, a fantastic pastor in New York, summarizes verse 4: "Christ ended the law as a way of righteousness, as a way to be acceptable to God." Righteousness behavior is not how we are acceptable to God. Israel should have known better than to think works could save them.

The third reason Israel should have known better is that they misunderstood the purpose of the Law.

Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: (verses 5-8).

At first glance this is a mildly confusing section of Scripture because we're not Jewish, so let's dig in. Paul is quoting a few Old Testament passages and applying them to Christ. The natural way to interpret verse 5 would be to think that salvation is found in obedience to the law. When you look at verses 6 and 7, though, it would be ridiculous to ask such questions. They are unnecessary. We all know we can't climb to heaven to meet Christ or dive into the depths to bring Him up because Christ has already risen from the dead. He is currently available to each of us.

Thankfully Paul brings some clarity in verse 8. All we need to do is to respond to what Christ has already done for us. Salvation is readily available—it's as close as your heart and as close as your

mouth; it's as close as believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth. Israel misunderstood the purpose of the law.

The fourth reason Israel should have known better is that they have already heard and understood.

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. 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."**

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" (verses 16-19).

We know that not all the Israelites accepted the Gospel message, as Isaiah says in verse 16. Just like in my dinner conversation with Andy, not everyone who hears the Gospel will accept it. But Israel has also heard the Gospel and chosen not to accept it. Jesus was one of their own and they failed to recognize Him as the sent Messiah. Paul proposes questions here and answers them using the Old Testament, to show us how Israel already heard and understood. He wants to make sure he is clear on how Israel has had every opportunity to confess their faith in Christ. Israel has heard the message of Christ. They have understood the message of Christ but ultimately they have chosen to reject the message.

My heart goes out to God's people as I read these verses. Not all Jews have rejected the message of Christ. The first disciples were all Jews. The early church was filled with Jews who accepted Christ as the coming Messiah. In fact, Paul himself was a Jew who heard and understood and accepted the message. We've actually baptized people in our church who are Jews.

So there we have it. These are the four reasons the Israelites should have known the truth about Jesus. Unfortunately they were zealous without knowledge, they tried to save themselves by good works, they misunderstood the purpose of the law, and they didn't accept the message of Christ. If God's own people are missing the boat, then who can be saved? Thankfully there is hope!

The Gospel is for Everyone

In verses 8-15 Paul is going to show us the possibility, availability and responsibility of salvation because the Gospel is for everyone. The Jews may have missed it, but not everyone has missed it. Let's start by looking at the possibility of salvation.

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him

from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (verses 9-10).

This is the clearest passage in the entire Bible on how to become a Christian. The verses almost seem to be repetitive in nature. Paul uses a form of writing that is similar to Hebrew poetry, which repeats a thought for emphasis.

Notice how Paul starts out with a clarifying "if." Salvation is possible for everyone, but there is human responsibility. A person must do two things: confess with their mouth and believe in their heart. The heart and the mouth are used in unison, inward belief and outward confession. With our mouth we confess "Jesus is Lord." Many people will say that Jesus is their savior, which is awesome, but the word "savior" is used only six to eight times in the New Testament. The word "Lord" however is used over 600 times. Jesus isn't only our Savior, He is also our Lord. So we are to declare with our mouth that He is our Lord and we also must believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead. Many people believe Jesus died on the cross, but not everyone believes that He rose from the dead. The Resurrection hangs people up from following Christ. They think it unfathomable that Jesus could conquer death. This is what sets Christians apart. This is why we're going to celebrate Easter in a few short weeks—because Christ rose from the dead!

There is a need for a person to do both confession and belief. Some people have only believed in their heart; they believe the message of Christ, but they haven't told anyone they've committed their life to Christ. They aren't embarrassed of the choice but they don't feel the need to share their decision with others. The Bible never talks about undercover agents for the Gospel. If you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and has risen from the dead, then confess that with your mouth!

This week I had a long-time friend call me to discuss being vocal about her faith. She started the conversation by saying, "I've always been a Christian, but I don't want to be one of those Christians." She was referring to Christians who confess they believe in God but their actions don't show it. God is working in her. She is getting ready to head to the Olympic games in Brazil to rescue girls from sex trafficking. She wants to know how to be more vocal about her faith and tell others. She is going there to confess that she believes in Jesus and God is going to use her to help others who might do the same. That's a great transition to the next thing we read about the Gospel.

As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame" (v. 11).

The Gospel is available to everyone. Those who put their trust in Christ will never be put to shame. We live in a place where many people feel shame. But you don't have to live a life filled

with shame when you have salvation in Christ. How comforting is the next verse.

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, (v. 12).

There is no difference for anyone who has trusted Christ; He is Lord of all. Anyone can accept the Gospel because there is no shame in it, and it's for everyone!

Romans 10:13 is a direct quote from the prophet Joel: **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."** This is assurance of salvation. Some people are scared they may lose their salvation. But salvation is available to all, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will find that salvation. If you summarize these three verses, it sounds like this: "There is no shame for those who trust in the Lord because all who call on Him will be saved."

The Gospel is for everyone, but do you know we have a responsibility to share it?

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 anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (verses 14-15).

These verses actively destroy the extreme side of the doctrine of election where some people will say, "We don't have to tell people about Jesus because God already knows who will be saved." In fact, when the first modern missionary William Carey suggested to his friend that he was thinking about going to Burma to share the Gospel, his friend responded by saying, "If God wants to save the heathen let Him do it Himself." That guy hadn't read these verses!

Paul uses four questions here to provoke us to think about the good news of Jesus. He talks about the need for the Gospel to be preached. Some of you saw the word "preach" and thought, "I'm so glad Rob is here to do that!" You've already decided in your mind that you are not a preacher. The word here is actually *herald*. Back in Paul's era there was no newspaper so a herald would go through the town announcing good news to the people. This is what Christians are to do, we are to be heralds for the good news of Jesus Christ. We are to bring good news to people who are hurting, confused, marginalized and lost.

The feet of those who bring good news are beautiful. It's almost better to look at this in reverse order. The feet bring the good news because they have been sent to preach. By their preaching, people will hear the good news. If they haven't heard, they will never have a chance to believe in Jesus Christ. If they believe in Christ, then they will call on the name of the Lord. So who is the best person to share the good news? God has chosen you and me. We are the best people to share the good news with our

spouses, friends, co-workers, people on our sports teams and in our schools. Notice that it's not our job to convert people, we are to simply share the good news.

Last Sunday our Young Adults went to City Impact to serve in the Adopt-A-Building program. We arrived after church, got a quick debrief, and then went to the buildings. In each building we would knock on doors and deliver hot meals to people in their rooms. On the team I served on, we had a gentleman join us from the building and he shared his story with me. City Impact began ministering to him and four years ago he gave his life to Christ. He told me, "I used to sit in the lobby and read my Bible, but I realized that I needed to share the truth about Christ with my neighbors." How cool is that? He knows the Gospel is for everyone and in a direct response to what was done for him, he is now doing the same!

Now not everyone has the gift/call of evangelism. Paul told his disciple Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). You may not have the natural gift of evangelism, but we all have the responsibility to share the gospel because the gospel is for everyone, and how will they hear if someone doesn't share it with them? In the Great Commission, Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples. There are currently over three billion people in the world who have yet to accept Christ as their Lord. There are currently eighty-two unreached people groups in the United States alone. Two of those groups are living right across the Bay from us.

The calling to be a Christian is to take the saving message of Jesus Christ to others. The fact is, if you are a Christian, you are sent into the world as a herald. We cannot ignore our responsibility to share the good news with others. The quickest way to kill a church is to stop reaching out, but more importantly people lose out on an opportunity to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Not Everyone Will Accept the Gospel

Chapter 10 ends with Paul quoting the Old Testament.

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."

But concerning Israel he says,

"All day long I have held out my hands

to a disobedient and obstinate people" (verses 20-21).

First we have good news for everyone and then in verse 21 we have good news for the Jews. God revealed Himself to those who didn't ask for Him. This is referring to the Gentiles, to you and me. But to the Israelites, God held His hands out all day long and they ignored Him. They didn't respond to the message of salvation. The Gentiles responded better than the Jews did! This is topsyturvy. The ones who knew the most about God did not come to know God, while the ones who knew the least about God came to know God the best! This is not how you expect the story to go. These verses sum up everything we've been talking about: The Gospel is for everyone, but not everyone accepts the Gospel.

Paul hadn't yet asked the church in Rome to actively share their faith, but now he is. This passage leaves us with two stark realities: every person is responsible for how they treat the saving message of Christ, and every Christian is responsible for communicating that saving message of Christ. There is something called the bystander effect. We talked about this at our Men's Retreat two weeks ago. The bystander effect basically says that most people will stand around and not act because they think it is someone else's responsibility to act.

Many of you are experiencing the bystander effect right now. You are thinking, "Someone needs to go and tell others about Christ." But you don't think that someone is you. You think it is the responsibility of someone else to go and share the saving message of Christ, when in reality it is your responsibility. To make this absolutely clear, I want each of you to know that I am talking to you. I am talking directly to you. It is your responsibility to share this message with others. We all need to do it. And Easter is coming, so you have a perfect time to do it!

Let me give you two practical ideas. In your bulletin there is an invite card for our Easter services. This week will you pray about sharing that with a friend, neighbor or co-worker? It might be scary for you to invite a friend, but the best way to straighten your faith is to share your faith! Another idea is to finally have that conversation with your friend about Christ that you've been avoiding. You are smart. God has given you all you need. It's going to take faith, but trust in God because the Gospel is for everyone.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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