
The Message and the Messenger

(Romans 10:14-15)

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February 5th, 2006

Proposition:

“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.”

Introduction:

There are a few questions that Christians have when it comes to evangelism. One that you may have asked or you may have been asked is this. “What happens to those who have never heard the gospel? Will God send them to hell?” This is a very difficult question that has been debated by Christians for many centuries. Some say that it would be unfair and unjust of God to condemn people who did not even have the opportunity to respond.

Then there is another question that some may have considered and it goes like this. “Why do we need to evangelize and do outreach and missions if God already knows who’s going to heaven and who’s going to hell?” I mean if God is really sovereign and in control of our destinies, then why do we need to preach the gospel?

And then the follow up question which is a lot more relevant to many of us is this. “Do we really need to be involved in world missions?” Do we really have to spend literally tens of thousands of dollars annually to send and aide missionaries and send students on short term mission experiences?

Have you ever asked these questions?

Well the short answer is this and we’ll try to unpack and better understand it. And hopefully it will help each one of you become more missions minded.

The answer to all three of these questions is this. *Without God’s people going to non-believing people and preach the gospel, they cannot become Christians and go to heaven.*

I. You can’t call on someone you don’t believe in. (14a)

All sorts of people believe in all sorts of stuff. There are people who worship crocodiles as I once saw on television. They mutilate themselves and they do the crocodile dance and have this sacred ceremony. So these people believe in the crocodile god.

There are people who believe in a creator, but not a personal creator who sent his Son to die for them. These are the Native Indian people that live in this country. They believe in this creator and they call on him through pow-wows and sweat lodges and vision quests and many Native young people have gotten a renewed desire to find this traditional religion.

There are people who believe in themselves so when they get into trouble or some type of

problem who do they call on? They call on themselves. They say that no one but themselves can help them. Just like Kobe Bryant said, "Just believe in yourself." And a great number of the young people in our schools are taught that belief and live by that belief.

People call on what they believe in. Christians don't call on Allah. Christians don't call on the Buddha. Christians don't call on the sun god or moon god. We call on the God we do because that is the God we believe in.

It's like discovering the website you never thought existed, but always hoped was there. It was the website that fit your particular need to a T. At first, you doubted and wondered if such a website could exist. And you hear confirmation from others. I've visited that site and it's great. It's just what you're looking for. And as you visit this site for the first time you discover that all of it is true. It is as they say it was. In fact it's even better. And now that you've discovered this site, you've bookmarked this page. You've even made it your homepage. And you visit it over and over again.

Folks, God's desire for all of mankind is that every man, woman and child would call him Father. His desire burning in his heart from the very beginning of creation and even now is this: that people would receive the gift of forgiveness for sins by receiving the sin payment that was given through the death and resurrection of his son.

1 Timothy 2:4 ⁴ [God]...wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

But, you can't call on someone you don't believe in. And that's what missions is all about, both local and global, it's about introducing people to God.

But, how will they believe?

II. You can't call on someone you don't believe in because you can't believe in someone you've never heard about. (14b)

No one, I mean no one believes in stuff they've never heard about. You at least have to hear about it, to know it, in order to believe in it. Our lives are filled with moment after moment of learning and experiencing and hearing, and it's not until we've heard about something and learned about it that we can believe in it. I mean something like this. Try to think of the most bizarre or unusual or rare thought or idea or concept. Now, is it possible for us to come up with that thought or idea without it being somewhat dependent on another idea which we've heard or picked up along the way? In other words, is it possible to come up with a truly original idea? I don't think so. The bible surely doesn't think so. It says, there is nothing new under the sun. All of our thought is based on other thoughts

The bible says people can have a general knowledge of God from nature. Here's what it says in Romans 1.

Romans 1:18-21 ¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

These verses are saying that God has hardwired people from the beginning of creation with the inherent ability to know God. How? Through creation. Yet the bible also makes it clear, in Romans 10 (today's verses) and elsewhere that this information is insufficient for salvation, for deep, intimate and personal relationship with God. And that's the reason throughout the Bible, God speaks. He talks with people and reveals himself, his purposes and his ways.

God speaks directly. God speaks through angels. God speaks through prophets. God speaks through nature. (The heavens declare...) God speaks through the Bible, God speaks through circumstances, God speaks through Jesus, the Word become flesh, and God speaks through everyday ordinary people like you. I mean for crying out loud, he even spoke through a donkey!

Ever try to have a conversation with someone and neither of you knows what to say? It's uncomfortable and you feel kind of stupid. God knows that unless he started the conversation that we'd have nothing to say. God is a God of communication.

Unless you and I tell people about Jesus, they will never know about Jesus. They have to hear. That is why inviting people to church, inviting people to read the scriptures, inviting people to a book study, is so effective in bringing them into a relationship with God. God, the creator of mankind, the divine programmer, has wired every single human being to be able to know God by hearing.

But how will they hear?

III. A person can't call on someone you don't believe in because you can't believe in someone you've never heard about because you can't hear something unless someone preaches to you. (14c)

In other words, there is a need for a messenger. A preacher, an apologist, an evangelist, or a missionary.

Let's talk about preaching for a minute.

Throughout church history a very interesting relationship has existed between preaching and the condition of the church and God's people. Even from the Old Testament God has made it so that people would come to God when they are preached the Word of God. The prophets of old were preachers. Moses was a preacher. Nathan when he confronted David with sin was a preacher. And moving into the New Testament, we have John the Baptist and Jesus and Peter and Paul. As we look into 20 centuries of church history, the rise and fall of the church can be closely linked with the quality of her preaching. When the quality of the preaching sank, then the church sank. When the quality of the preaching rose, the church rose.

What's the difference between teaching and preaching? Teaching focuses on the mind, primarily on learning. It is much more cognitive, whereas preaching focuses on the mind, heart, emotions and will. It aims to change the behavior of a person.

That's why preaching is at the forefront of the church's activities. Because we believe that lives can and will be changed through preaching. That's the way God designed it. Take a look at Acts 2. It was just after Christ went back to heaven. The first sermon the disciples ever delivered. It was straight and to the point. It was Spirit filled and empowered. And it changed the lives of 3000

people.

We had this professor in seminary named Robert Coleman. He was the professor on evangelism. And he was very famous in Christian circles. He wrote a bunch of books on evangelism and discipleship. But as a lecturer he was incredibly boring. He was monotonous. There was no change in the dynamics of his voice. He just read from his notes. He would say, "point 1, point 2, etc." But once he got on the topic of Jesus, or the cross, his eyes would light up, his back would straighten up, his heart would start to race, his blood rushed to his face and he would start to talk faster and then literally grab the head of a student in front of him, look him straight in the eyes and yell out, do you believe?!" No one sat in the front after that.

That's what preaching is.

All this to say that there has to be a messenger, a carrier, a deliver of the message of the gospel. And that responsibility doesn't just fall on career pastors and missionaries. It falls on all followers of Christ.

A couple of things about the messenger.

1. The messenger has to carry the right message. (Content)

We have no liberty to alter, to add or subtract from God's message. We have no right to make it easier than it is or more difficult. We have no right to leave out the hard to listen to parts and just focus on the easy to listen to stuff. The messenger must carry the right message.

2. The messenger has to carry the right character. (Character)

Why do we buy one product over another product when they're essentially the same product? One reason is reputation. We look at the character of the company introducing this product. They've introduced other products. I've bought those products and I've been satisfied. And so we have placed our trust in that company. The same is true for the messengers of the gospel. Our lifestyle, our character must match our message.

God has made it that it will be through human messengers of God's life giving message, that people will find salvation.

But how will they hear the message through the messenger?

IV. You can't call on someone you don't believe in because you can't believe in someone you've never heard about because you can't hear something unless someone preaches to you and you can't be preached to someone unless they are sent and go.
(15)

The church has to send people and people have to be willing to go.

Well all of the four previous things, the calling, the believing, the hearing, the preaching are all useless...if it never leaves the walls of this church. Look again at verse 15.

Romans 10:15 ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

This verse is a rewording of Jesus' call in Matthew's book, spoken to all disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations!"

How can people hear the preaching of the gospel if God's messengers don't go out to the people who need to hear it and preach the gospel? We have to go. We have to step outside the church and go to people who need to hear the gospel.

Let me suggest three areas of evangelism and missions that you can be involved in.

1. family (perhaps the most difficult area)
2. local (work, neighborhood, the city)
3. Global
 - i. Short term and career.

I'm so proud of those of you who have chosen to obey God and go on short term mission trips. And I know many more of you will go on one. But there are some of you, who won't even consider it and make excuses against it. And my friends, you are disobeying God. Keith Green said it like this. "Jesus commands us to go, it should be an exception if we stay." Has God given you that exception? Has he told you to stay? It doesn't say that in my Bible.

Conclusion:

Folks, I hope that every single follower of Christ here will take this call seriously. God has so designed it so his plans for reaching the world will be accomplished through us. He's invited us into the mission. He's called us to be a part of the mission. In fact He's commanded us to be involved in leading peoples near and far to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ. I hope that during this month, as we focus on Missions, both local and global. As you listen to some great speakers, you will open your hearts to obey God's call to missions.