



How Shall They Hear?

“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:15,17).

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“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, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. 19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. 20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Romans 10:14-21).

Introduction

What a good question! The Apostle Paul addresses one of the greatest questions in the Christian faith: **How does God bring people to salvation?** Romans 10 reveals God's method. Men and women cannot believe unless they hear. They cannot hear unless someone tells them. They cannot be told unless someone is sent. Yet even when the Gospel is faithfully proclaimed, not everyone will receive it. This passage teaches us three vital truths:

1. God uses human messengers.
2. God uses His Word to create faith.
3. Human beings remain responsible for their response.

We will study this in six parts:

- 1) GOD'S PLAN IS THAT THE GOSPEL MUST BE PROCLAIMED
- 2) FAITH COMES THROUGH HEARING GOD'S WORD
- 3) NOT EVERYONE WHO HEARS WILL OBEY
- 4) GOD HAS MADE HIS TRUTH KNOWN
- 5) GOD'S GRACE REACHES THOSE WHO WERE FAR OFF
- 6) GOD'S PATIENT HEART TOWARD SINNERS

I. GOD'S PLAN IS THAT THE GOSPEL MUST BE PROCLAIMED

In our previous study, we learnt from Romans 10:13 that "... whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved". Paul built on this principle by posing these pertinent questions that demand our answers— "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? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Romans 10:14-15). In these verses Paul presents a divine chain: **Sent → Preaching → Hearing → Believing → Calling → Salvation.**

God could have written the Gospel in the clouds every morning. He could have sent angels to every nation. Yet He has chosen to use redeemed men and women as His witnesses. Christ's Commission remains:

- "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

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- "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." (Matthew 28:19)

The Church is not merely a gathering place; it is a sending agency. God sent Philip to one man travelling through the desert. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." (Acts 8:29). Because Philip obeyed, the Ethiopian heard the Gospel and believed. One obedient witness changed the destiny of an entire man that impacted others as well.

When the missionary William Carey left England for India in 1793, many thought the effort foolish. Yet through decades of labour, Bible translation, education, and evangelism, countless people heard the Gospel who otherwise would never have known Christ. God still works through those who are willing to be sent.

Paul quotes Isaiah: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15). The beauty is not in the feet themselves but in the message they carry. A postman may not be remarkable, but a letter announcing a pardon to a condemned prisoner is precious. Likewise, the messenger of Christ carries the greatest news in the world.

II. FAITH COMES THROUGH HEARING GOD'S WORD

Romans 10:17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is not produced by human wisdom, emotional manipulation, clever arguments, or religious ceremony. Faith is produced by God's Word. There is Power in the Scripture. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." (1 Peter 1:23). God's Word creates what it commands.


At creation God spoke. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). The same God who spoke light into existence speaks spiritual life into dead hearts through His Word. For example, at Pentecost Peter preached Christ. The result? - "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37). Three thousand souls were converted because they heard God's truth proclaimed.

When Jesus sent the disciples out on mission, He told them in Matthew 10:7 "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand". This emphasises that evangelism is to be part of the believer's daily walk and movement through life, not merely an activity confined to special meetings or church services. It also points out that evangelism involves both "preaching" and "saying". A person can preach (e.g. by exemplary life) without saying anything verbally, but Jesus is pointing out that effective evangelism must incorporate both exemplary life and "saying" (i.e. preaching).

Many believers become discouraged because they feel inadequate. We all need to remember that the power is not in the messenger; but in the message. A witness may be nervous, inexperienced, or lacking eloquence, yet God's Word remains effective. As the Lord declared: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void" (Isaiah 55:11). So, release the power in your mouth for the transformation of lives in the world.

III. NOT EVERYONE WHO HEARS WILL OBEY

Romans 10:16 "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" Paul introduces a sobering reality. The Gospel can be faithfully preached and still be rejected. Isaiah preached God's truth to Israel, yet many refused to listen - "Lord, who



hath believed our report?" (Isaiah 53:1). The problem was not the message. The problem was the hearts of the hearers.

Jesus also faced rejection. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). If Christ Himself was rejected, we should not be surprised when some reject the Gospel today. In the Parable of the Sower Jesus taught that "A sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5). The seed was the same in every case. The difference lay in the soil. Some hearts were hard, some shallow, some crowded with worldly concerns, and some receptive. The issue was never the seed. The issue was the response.

As encouragement, faithful service is measured by obedience, not visible results. Noah preached for many years. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9). Yet only eight souls entered the ark. God honoured Noah's faithfulness even when the response appeared small.

Whilst admonishing Timothy, Paul said: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

The opportunities you have today to share the gospel with individuals may not always be there, so "Make Haye while the sun shines".


IV. GOD HAS MADE HIS TRUTH KNOWN

Romans 10:18 "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Paul argues that Israel could not claim ignorance. They had heard. God had spoken repeatedly and also displayed His witness in Creation. Paul quotes Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork". Creation itself bears witness to God.

God's Witness also exist Through Scripture. Israel possessed the Law, the Prophets, and the promises. "Unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Romans 3:2). Their problem was not lack of information. Their problem was unwillingness to submit. For example, a man may possess numerous Bibles, attend church regularly, hear sermons online, and discuss spiritual matters frequently, yet still reject Christ. More information does not necessarily produce obedience. The issue is the condition of the heart.

V. GOD'S GRACE REACHES THOSE WHO WERE FAR OFF

Romans 10:19-20 "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you." "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." The Gentiles, once strangers to God's covenant, were receiving the Gospel. Elsewhere Paul teaches: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12-13). What grace! - that those who seemed least likely to seek God were being saved.



Consider The Conversion of Saul. No one expected Saul of Tarsus to become the Apostle Paul. Yet Christ met him on the Damascus road, and asked: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). God specialises in saving unexpected people. The most unlikely neighbour, colleague, family member, or friend may become a powerful witness for Christ. Never underestimate divine grace.

VI. GOD'S PATIENT HEART TOWARD SINNERS

Romans 10:21 "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." What a remarkable picture. God stands with outstretched hands. Not for a moment. Not for an hour, but for "All day long." God is longsuffering. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Note the action of the Father of the Prodigal Son, when the prodigal returned: "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran" to welcome him back (Luke 15:20). That father reflects the heart of God— A God who calls. A God who waits. A God who welcomes repentant sinners.

Note however, the solemn warning that God's patience should never be presumed upon. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). The day of grace will not last forever.

Conclusion

Romans 10:14–21 teaches us that:

1. God sends messengers to proclaim the Gospel.
2. Faith comes through hearing God's Word.
3. Not all who hear will believe.
4. God has made His truth known.
5. God's grace reaches unlikely people.
6. God's hands remain stretched out toward sinners.

The challenge before us is twofold.

- For believers: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15).
- For unbelievers: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13).

The Gospel has been proclaimed. The invitation has been given. The question remains: How will you respond to the outstretched hands of God?

Amen.