**GOD’S MESSAGE TO THE LOST WORLD  
Romans 10:1–21**

***“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” (v. 9).***

In Romans chapter 9, Paul confessed his “*great sorrow and unceasing anguish*” on behalf of his fellow Israelites who were still lost. That chapter concludes with a lament of Israel’s failure to attain righteousness because they pursued it by the law and by works. Today’s passage teaches very clearly how to obtain the righteousness of God by faith, showing both what we *don’t* need to do because God has already done it and what we *do* need to do, that is, how to respond to God’s grace in the gospel message with faith. Paul also teaches about God’s plan for world salvation through the preaching and acceptance of the gospel. May we learn God’s heart to rescue his perishing children as we study his message to the lost world.

1. **Righteousness for Everyone Who Believes (vs. 1–8)**

Paul begins chapter 10 by baring his broken heart for the people of Israel. Look at verse 1: “***Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.***” His heart’s desire—the one thing he wanted most in life—was the salvation his fellow Jews. This is amazing, since everywhere Paul traveled proclaiming the message of Christ, it was the Jews who opposed him vigorously and doggedly at every turn. In Pisidian Antioch, they “*heaped abuse on him*” (Acts 13:45). In Iconium, “*the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers*” (Acts 14:2). When Paul arrived in Lystra, some Jews who had followed him from Antioch and Iconium won the crowd over and stoned Paul, leaving him for dead outside the city (Acts 14:19). They opposed him also in Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Greece, and especially in Jerusalem. Yet wherever Paul went, the first place he preached was in the synagogue to the Jews. Why did Paul preach to the Jews so persistently even though they gave him so much trouble?

The answer is that Paul knew and shared God’s heart for the lost children of Israel. Paul understood from Scripture how much God loved them and earnestly desired for them to repent and be saved. We can learn from Paul God’s heart for us: we were opposed to God, living in rebellion against him, yet God loved us enough to send Jesus to give his life for us, his enemies. The more we understand God’s love for us, the more we can understand God’s heart for the lost world and, like Paul, earnestly desire and pray for their salvation.

Despite the Jews’ zealous opposition of Paul, Paul had pity on them. Look at verse 2: “***For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.***” During WWII, there was a Japanese commando, Lieutenant Onoda was deployed to Lubang Island in the Philippines with the orders to hamper enemy attacks on the island and never to surrender or take his own life. After more than a year of guerilla warfare, he found a leaflet the islanders had left for him, declaring the good news that the war was over and he could stop fighting. However, Onoda didn’t believe it; in fact, he continued his guerilla campaign for another 29 years after the end of the war, even killing some civilians before he was finally reached and relieved of duty. His zeal to fight for 30 years is commendable, but so misguided and pointless as to be tragic. In the same way, God sent the good news to the Jews that their Messiah had come to save them; their wait was over. But they refused to believe, instead fighting against God’s Son and his apostles. Paul had pity on them, especially since he had once been just like them—exceedingly zealous for God, but misguided to the point of persecuting the Messiah and his church.

The description of “zealous without knowledge” can apply to many young people today who are searching for meaning in life—some greater purpose that they can devote their lives to. However, many young people are deceived into fighting zealously in the name of social justice for causes that do more harm than good. The worst case of zeal without knowledge is the many young people—often from educated backgrounds—who are recruited into extremist groups like ISIS, because they see people who are willing to fight and die for a cause they believe in. In past generations, such youthful zeal has been channeled into missionary work that impacted much of the world for the gospel, such as the Student Volunteer Movement that sent 20,000 American college students as overseas missionaries. Today however, many students zealously advocate humanistic causes that can’t solve humanity’s underlying problem of sin. We should see zealous young people today with compassion as well as with hope that through the gospel message, their passion can be rechanneled constructively for God’s world salvation work—a cause truly worth living and dying for.

What was the knowledge that the Jews lacked? Look at verse 3: “***Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.***” The righteousness of God, the only way we can become truly righteous, is not any goodness that we could establish by doing something, but what we must submit to which God has already done. The Jews were ignorant of the righteousness of God because they were too proud to admit their inability to keep the law and submit to God’s way of salvation through Christ.

Paul states what it is that God has done for us already, which we don’t need to do, in verses 4, 6, and 7. Verse 4 says, “***Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.***” The original word for culmination can also mean end, goal, or fulfillment. Christ fulfilled the law. Christ is everything that the law was leading up to and preparing God’s people to receive. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law and also satisfied the penalty for our sin which the law required. In order for Christ to fulfill the law and impart righteousness to those who have faith in him, he had to come down from heaven, die on the cross, and rise from the dead. Paul quotes from the law, applying it to Christ the culmination of the law, in verses 6 and 7: “***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) 7 ‘or “Who will descend into the deep?”’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).***” It is humanly impossible to ascend from heaven to bring Christ down or to descend into the deep to raise Christ from the dead—but it is not necessary for us to do these because God has already done them. God made it possible to offer us the gift of righteousness through the miracle of the incarnation, Christ’s perfect human life, and the miracle of his resurrection. So redemption from sin and eternal life are no longer far off or beyond our reach. 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 message concerning faith that we proclaim***”. Because of the gospel message, salvation is no further away than our mouths and hearts, which we use to accept by faith the gift of salvation. Let’s see how Paul says we must use our mouths and hearts to receive salvation.

1. **How to Receive Salvation (vs. 9–13)**

Verse 9 contains a magnificent promise, showing us the way to accept God’s gift of righteousness, salvation, and eternal life by faith. It is a verse well worth committing to memory. Let’s read verse 9 all together: “***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.***” This is the way that God has provided for us to be saved from the eternal punishment that our sin deserves. In verse 9, Paul mentions mouth before heart, in keeping with his quote from Deuteronomy 30:14—“*it is in your mouth and in your heart*”. However, in verse 10, heart comes before mouth, which is the more logical order, for one cannot honestly profess what he doesn’t first believe. Let’s consider in depth what it means to declare Jesus as Lord, to believe the God raised him from the dead, and to be saved.

First: believe in your heart that God raised Christ from the dead. Belief in the Bible refers to more than mere intellectual assent. To believe something truly means that you live according to that fact. So what is the meaning of Christ’s resurrection? God’s raising Christ from the dead was God’s vindication of him, showing that Jesus was indeed the sinless Son of God and that his death on the cross had been accepted by God as full payment for human sin. This fact must be believed personally—not just that Jesus died for people’s sin, but that Jesus died for *my* sin and rose again for *my* justification. Since Christ rose from the dead, he is alive today and intercedes for us at the right hand of God. His death and resurrection 2,000 years ago affects me today and forever.

Second: declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord”. This phrase is not a magical formula that automatically grants eternal life; it must be said and meant. To say that Jesus is Lord means that Jesus is the Master, the King—that he’s in charge. And not just generally, but personally: Jesus is my Lord, my King—Jesus is in charge of my life. This declaration is a commitment to obey Jesus and turn over mastery of one’s life to him.

Declaration of Jesus’ lordship should also be public. We saw in Mark 5 the story of Jesus’ healing the chronic bleeding of a woman who touched his cloak by faith. She wanted to slip away unnoticed, but Jesus helped her to confess God’s healing grace she had received. By telling her, “*Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering*” (Mk 5:34), Jesus confirmed her salvation and restored her as a daughter of God. Moreover, in the following chapter, many people came from all over begging to touch Jesus’ cloak to receive healing (Mk 6:56). Mark never records Jesus asking people to touch his cloak. We can see the power of one testimony to bring many people to Jesus.

For many followers of Christ, confessing “Jesus is Lord” can be costly. In February of 2015, ISIS terrorists beheaded 20 Coptic Christians on a beach presumably in Libya. One man among those kidnapped was not thought to be a Christian. He saw his fellow captives refuse to deny Christ as they were brutally murdered. He was deeply moved by the 20 Christians’ confession of Jesus’ lordship, sealed with their blood. When his turn came, he reportedly told the executioners: “Their God is my God.” Because of his confession, he became the 21st victim—the 21st that day to enter into eternal life.

In America, it is extremely unlikely that declaring Jesus as Lord will lead to immediate death. However, acknowledging our faith and living according to it can in rare cases lead to academic or professional consequences. And it is likely that some people will think less of us or consider us strange. But we must still acknowledge Jesus as our Lord. Jesus said in Mark 8:38, “*If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.*” This is a stern warning we must heed. However, the opposite is also true; Jesus promises in Mark 13:13, “*…the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*”

Third: you will be saved. We already learned in Romans that “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rm 6:33). By our sinful nature and because of our sinful actions we deserve eternal punishment in hell. But God had compassion on us and provided a way of salvation through trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Jesus promised in John 5:24, “*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*” Salvation is not just the deliverance from judgment, but also the bestowment of eternal life—a new, meaningful, joyful life to the full that begins now and continues into eternity. Eternal life includes adoption into God’s family and a living hope of a glorious inheritance in the kingdom of God. What an amazing salvation God has made so freely available to us!

Look at verse 10: “***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.***” God’s wonderful salvation in Christ is no further away than our hearts and mouths. To whom is this salvation offered? Look at verses 11–13: “***As Scripture says, ‘Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.’ 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’***” Paul uses the words, “anyone”, “all”, and “everyone”, driving home the point that the gospel of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus is intended for every single person, whosoever believes—no exception.

So if you have never personally believed in Jesus, who died for your sin and rose again; if you have never made a personal commitment to follow Jesus as your Lord, God is extending the offer of salvation to you right now. In order to receive the greatest gift ever given, simply tell God something like this: “Father God, I acknowledge that I am a sinner who needs God’s salvation; I believe that Jesus died for my sin and rose again for my justification; and I confess that Jesus is my Savior and King who has total authority over my life; I belong to you and I submit to you from now on. Amen.”

God promises rich blessings and salvation to all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Let’s all confess together, “Jesus is Lord!” “God raised Jesus from the dead!” “Jesus is my Savior!” Amen.

We have a rich treasure in the gospel. God loves us so much to pay the blood of Jesus to redeem us and bring us to be with him in heaven forever. Let’s not keep this gift to ourselves, for God has intended it for all humanity.

1. **Those Who Bring Good News (14–21)**

Next, Paul details the chain of events that leads to being saved, God’s plan for world salvation. Look at verses 14–15a: “***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? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?...***” God’s plan to save the world is a 6-step process of be sent, preach, hear, believe, call on, and be saved. God didn’t have to do it this way; he could choose to speak directly to each person, as he called Abraham, Moses, and Paul. But for some reason, God has chosen to involve us in this greatest cause of all—if you want a cause to be zealous for, this is it—to save the world through the preaching of gospel of Jesus Christ and the acceptance thereof.

The work of salvation starts with sending. Sending is something God does, and something we cooperate in. When Jesus looked out and saw so many lost people awaiting the gospel like a field ready for harvest, Luke 10:2 says, “*He told [his disciples], ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’*” So we should pray earnestly for God to send out spiritual harvest workers to preach the gospel and make disciples.

So how can we know if we have been sent? Steve Shadrach, author of *The Fuel and the Flame*, shares in that book about his own calling to campus ministry by recalling his first day of seminary:

…each instructor posed the same question at the beginning of class, “What is your name, and how were you called into the ministry?” As I sat and listened to story after story, I was amazed. The first guy talked about running from God and finally surrendering, the next about walking the aisle after breaking down in tears, another retold a vision he received in the middle of the night, and on and on. By the time it was my turn, I didn’t know what to do. I was tempted to say “pass” but instead confessed, “Well, I became a Christian in high school and found out the Bible commanded us to share our faith and make disciples. So I went to college and started winning some of my fraternity brothers to Christ and discipling them. I enjoyed it so much that I thought I’d like to witness and disciple all the time and just thought taking some of these seminary courses might make me more effective in my ministry.” Being the only one the prof did not affirm with nods and amens made me a little uncomfortable, but the follow-up question was the real stinger: “Yes, brother, but how were you called into the ministry?” It was obvious my first answer did not satisfy him, but I had no other answer… If God calls all of us to follow Him and embrace the Great Commission, why would I need an emotional experience to confirm this calling? To me it was a clear command from Scripture… (Fuel and the Flame pg 223)

Being sent by God isn’t necessarily some supernatural or emotional experience, though it certainly can be. The point is that we shouldn’t wait for a special call from God beyond what we already have in Scripture. For me personally, I believed that God had called me to UBF, and since UBF is a ministry focused on campus evangelism and discipleship, I understood that as my call to make disciples of college students. I’m grateful that God has given me this calling because college students are the future leaders of the world, and winning them for Christ can have an outsized impact.

Each of us has a personal responsibility to participate in God’s plan for world salvation. Each of us has been sent to the lost world around us to preach the gospel. Paul quotes Isaiah in verse 15b, “***As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’***” The feet are the dirtiest and least beautiful part of the body—especially for a messenger who has traveled a long way on foot. But the feet that tire and blister and swell in order to bring the gospel to the lost are so beautiful to those who are perishing and in need of that life-saving message, and also so beautiful to God, who has sent them on that mission.

When we preach the gospel, what kind of reaction should we expect? Will everyone we approach repent and believe on the spot? Look at verse 16: “***But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our message?’***” The reason that the Israelites are not saved is not that they didn’t hear the gospel, nor that they didn’t understand, for even the Gentiles were able to understand. Verse 21 gives the real reason: “***But concerning Israel he says, ‘All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.’***” The real reason people reject the good news of the gospel is not lack of evidence or lack of understanding, but disobedience and obstinacy—stubborn refusal to turn from self-love and submit to God.

In this verse, we see a poignant image of God’s heart for the lost, as a father holding out his hands of love and reconciliation to a stubborn, disobedient child—not just for a minute, but all day long. God pleads earnestly with his people in Ezekiel 33:11, “*As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?*” God makes his appeal to the lost world through us, his church, as Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:20: “*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*”

Not everyone will accept God’s plea, but that must not deter us; we must preach. Some will accept, for God has preserved a remnant of his people in every generation. God has given us the good news of salvation through faith in Christ. Let’s speak that news together from verse 9: “***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.***” May our prayer and heart’s desire be for the salvation of the lost world. May we be the outstretched hands of God held out to the world with the message of salvation through faith in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.