

The word of faith 2

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[0 : 00] Now, as we are looking at Romans 9, 10 and 11 at the moment, a helpful thought to have in mind is this one.

! How is it that some people believe in Christ and other people don't? It's the picture of Romans 9 to 11 of people going through their lives and coming up against Jesus Christ, who is like a rock in the way. Some people, as it says in chapter 9 verse 32, some find due to that rock that they are never put to shame. The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. But other people come against the same person, the same Christ, the same rock, and they trip over it and they stumble and they stumble catastrophically.

As it says in the same verse 9, 33, see I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And Christ has this effect that as we come up against him, we either find that it all makes wonderful sense and we build our lives on that rock and are secure forever. Or alternatively, we trip over and that's catastrophic. And that seems to me very much at the heart of what Paul is talking about. And it's a question for us today. Will we find that Christ is the rock on which we stand or the reason or something that we stumble over? It's a question for people around us because the whole world around us is responding to Christ either one way or another. And for Paul, the particular focal point of this intense question is his own nation, the nation who of all nations should have believed because they had the scriptures that Jesus Christ came to fulfill. So it is a conundrum. And we could say, is it God's fault?

Is God incompetent? Has he just not managed to produce a persuasive argument or bring a strong enough salvation? Is it God's failure? Is it proof of his irrelevance? Because there it is. This is what happens. Particularly true in terms of the nation of Israel. And if it does prove that God is incompetent, then that is a terrible blow to the glory of God. And we might also ask, how did the rock intrude into people's lives anyway? I think we'll probably see a little bit of that coming up as we go through. So that's, I think, a helpful way for us to start. And as we go through chapter 10, I warn you that Paul uses a lot of quotes from the Old Testament. So I'll try not to make it over burdensome, but we are going to have to work hard at this chapter because it's not perhaps as straightforward as you might think at first appearance. So can I then remind you of some of the things that we looked at last time? I brought out a theological toolkit. We won't use all the tools today, but I can remind you of some of the things that Paul's already made clear is that human beings are free moral agents with real personal responsibility. And if we don't believe, if we sin, if we rebel, we can't blame God for it. You might say, well, that's unfair. To which I reply, it's just the way it is.

Our sin is not God's fault. He's not to blame for that. We are. That's the way he's made us. That's the way it is. And another theological piece of the toolkit, if you like, is the idea of salvation by grace or salvation by God's grace, or sometimes people just say grace. What is meant by this is that the whole heart of the way God saves people is it's not by their earning or competing or achieving, but it is by a gift that he gives, which is received by faith. And the more you think about it, the more opposite those two ways are, as I think we shall see, not by earning something, not by competing, so I'm better than somebody else. Although we can slip back into thinking things like that. Not by achieving, you know, achieving something as you meditate or achieving something as you go through life's race or achieving anything. So that you can say, look what I've achieved. It's the complete opposite of that. God saves people as a gift. That's what grace is.

[5 : 44] And I would be bold to say that of all the religions in the world, Christianity is the only one which is based on God's grace.

God saves people as a gift.

Christ, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And it does mean whoever. It means, you know, from Mother Teresa of Calcutta to Jimmy Savile. If Jimmy Savile was still alive, the Lord would make that offer to him. If you call on the name of the Lord, you say he's a monster. He's a terrible man. He was a terrible man. Did terrible things to people. But the offer still says, whoever, if you, Jimmy Savile, were to call on the name of the Lord, you would be saved. Jimmy Savile had a history of abusing young people, in case you're not quite sure who he was. So here we have the picture of the offer and the call. And I want to try to persuade you, first of all, that chapter 10 is very much about this matter, the call of the gospel. If you look into chapter 10, verse 2, he says, what's the problem with Israel? Well, he says, they're zealous, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

[7 : 35] And he says, there's a problem of knowledge. They don't know something. And he is going to go on to say, they need to be told it. And then he will say, they have been told it.

But it's what they have heard and know that's the question. In chapter 10, verse 8, Paul is going to talk about a word. The word is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart.

That is the word of faith that we are proclaiming. So word, message. It doesn't just mean a word, a single thing of four or five syllables. He means a message.

That's what we are talking about. The word, the message to do with salvation by grace received by faith. The word of faith, he says, that's what we're talking about. And that's what we talk about to people.

And then in chapter 10, verse 15, he, here's a little quote, talking about somebody preaching. And how beautiful on the feet, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

[8 : 51] So he's talking about somebody like a missionary or somebody standing on a street corner or somebody going into a family and telling them the message about Jesus Christ. It's all about this offer.

And in chapter 10, verse 17, which we'll look at again in a moment, faith comes from hearing the message. As the NIV translation says, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

And I ask, did they hear? So he's talking about a message that people are hearing. Okay, that's all I simply want to say.

That's what this chapter is about. And so we'll try and look at it section by section. So are you with me so far? Yeah, okay, good, thank you.

So let's think a little bit more about how Paul works his way through this. And the first thing that I want to say is that Jesus Christ is the crisis issue for this message, for salvation.

[10 : 08] And I'm looking at chapter 9, verse 30, down to chapter 10, verse 4, which says, What should we say then that the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith, but Israel who pursued a law of righteousness has not attained it.

Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, See in Zion I lay a stone that causes men to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God, and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Christ is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. And I'm simply trying to draw out from this, that although he talks about righteousness and faith, he's really saying the central issue is Jesus Christ.

[11 : 32] Let's look at, try and look a little bit at how he says this. There are two apparent roots to righteousness. Now righteousness is when we can stand before God without fear, and with the confidence that God is saying, he's one of my people, she's one of my people, I'm on the side of this person.

They pray to me, I'm going to listen to them. They're in trouble, I'm going to help them. That's what it means to stand in righteousness before God. Now then, the two apparent roots.

One, righteousness by faith, which he says, for example, end of chapter 4, righteousness for everyone who believes. And then righteousness by works.

Righteousness, let's take it in order, by the law. Verse 31, he says, Israel pursued a law of righteousness.

And although that is a condensed way of putting it, it seems clear that what he's saying is, they are trying to get righteous with God by keeping the law.

[12:50] In their case, by keeping the law of Moses, which is the very law that God gave. In verse 32, he says, they pursued righteousness not by faith, but as if it were by works.

And in chapter 10, verse 3, they say, since they did not know the righteousness from God, they sought to establish their own righteousness.

So it's something that they had constructed. And Paul says this is very zealous, because they try very, very hard, but it's very ignorant, because that's not the way God works.

And he contrasts it with, in verse 32, righteousness which is by faith. And he contrasts it with, in chapter 11, verse 3, the righteousness of God, the righteousness that comes from God, or the righteousness given by God, or the righteousness that God, the way God deals.

And this righteousness is something that you submit to. And there we have it. The Israelites, Israel, as Paul writes in this moment, seeking righteousness one way, rather than the other way.

[14:13] And he says what they're doing is they're forgetting that Christ is the thing. Christ is the end of the law. End can mean goal, it can mean fulfillment, it can mean termination, but whatever precise spin he has on it, he's saying, now we have Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus Christ is clearly portrayed. He's the way to be righteous. Righteousness comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

He's the critical point. And as we're sitting here this morning, you might think, well, this is all rather irrelevant to me, because I'm not a Jew. I don't feel obliged to keep the food laws, or worship in the synagogue, or the temple, and I'm not interested in kosher food, and Rosh Hashanah, and things like that.

And I say, okay, but you are perfectly capable of thinking of yourself the same way.

You might have your own version of the law. You might have your own works. I still remember in the Christopher Robin books, which you probably have never even heard of, Christopher Robin walked down the pavement, and there are cracks in the pavement, and he thought that if he stepped on a crack, he'd be eaten by bears.

[15:44] You ever done that with Solomon? No, quite wise. But, so his law was, don't walk on the cracks in the pavement. And we all have little laws like that.

We might think, well, if I eat vegetarian, then I shall be right with God. If I save the planet, and turn my central heating down, I shall be right with God. If I take the moral high ground, and despise people like Dave Lee Travis, and Jimmy Savile, then I'm right with God.

If I pray a lot, I'll be, I'm right with God. If I do a pilgrimage, I'll be right with God. And all of those things, are in one way or another, trying to be righteous by law. If that's the basis that we have, if we see them as the basis of our relationship with God.

And, the Bible says, no one can ever, be right with God, by law. Righteousness is by Christ, by trusting in Him, righteousness comes to us amazingly, as this gift of grace, through faith.

So I stop and ask, what is it that you are depending on, in your relationship with God? What is it that you say, well, this is why God will accept me.

[17:03] You know the, the famous question, I'm not sure whether it's in the Alpha course, or one of these courses that says, if you were to die tonight, and go to meet God, and God was to say to you, why should I let you into heaven?

What would you answer? Would you say, well, because I've, because I've, because I've, been good to my neighbor, because I've, been to all the prayer meetings, because I've, read my Bible, because I'm not as bad as the other people, none of those answers, is any good, because they're all law, they're all works.

The only answer, that we'll, achieve, is, because, Jesus Christ, died, died, for me. Yeah?

Why should I go into heaven? Because Jesus Christ, died. So, Christ, is the crisis issue, for salvation, and, we are to believe in him.

Okay, let's look, now, at the second, section, from verses, uh, oops, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Um, yeah.

[18:31] Verses, I don't know why I've written, nine, verses five, to thirteen. Verses five to thirteen.

Yep, okay. So now, Paul is sort of saying the same thing again, and he contrasts two words, or two messages, uh, and, we'll look at each of them.

Uh, so, verse five, Moses describes in this way, the righteousness as it is by the law. The man who does these things, will live by them. So this is, quoting Moses, I told you there's some quotes. He's, quoting, more or less, word for word, uh, more or less, word for word, from Leviticus 18, which I will read to you.

It says, the Lord said to Moses, speak to the Israelites, say to them, I am the Lord your God. You must not do as they did in Egypt, where you used to live. You must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I'm bringing you.

[19 : 38] Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws, and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them, will live by them.

I am the Lord. That's, uh, we're pretty sure that's where he's quoting from. Uh, and he's, he's, he's not saying anything wrong there, is he? Saying to those people, don't be like the Egyptians, you've just been redeemed from Egypt.

Don't be like the Canaanites, with their child sacrifice, and worship of Molech. Don't be like them, because I'm your God, and I want you to obey me.

And that's fair enough, isn't it? And Paul quotes this, and the, the aspect that he picks out of it, is this. The man who does these things, will live by them.

That's the idea. The righteousness of the law, says this. The man who has done these things, will live, or perhaps, more literally, in it.

[20 : 46] This is, this word is the doing word. Now, we do need to ponder this. Christians have to obey as well. Obedience is desirable, and in fact, obedience is vital.

So, it's not saying that Christians, have no obedience, in their lives. And, it's not saying that, the law's vision, is wrong.

Because, what the law of Moses says, it has a vision. It says, this is, this is, this is, how life ought to be lived. And, that law's vision is right.

The details of it, get transformed, through Jesus Christ. So, the law talks about circumcision, and food laws, and that all gets transformed, into some, some way, in the hands of Jesus Christ.

But, Jesus, was not, against the law. But, I think what we could say is, if we understand, the law, if we understand the law, to be promising life, if that's how we understand it, the man who does these things, will live, by them.

[22 : 05] If we understand that as a law, as a promise of life, it won't work. And, if we understand the law, as a basis for righteousness, it can't be done.

So, Moses gave all these laws, some of them very wonderful, the heart of it being, love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and strength, and soul, and might, and your labor as yourself.

There's nothing wrong with that. But, if that, if, we're looking there, for the promise of eternal life, it doesn't work. It's, impossible, for us to be righteous, by law.

And, if you think back, into the Old Testament, Abraham, didn't, have, law keeping, as the basis of his relationship, with God.

It was faith. And, David, King David, didn't have, law keeping, as the basis of his relationship, with God, because he knew, what it was to be forgiven, didn't he?

[23 : 19] He said, blessed is the man, to whom God does not impute, iniquity. And, David sinned. And, he couldn't, rest, on his law keeping, for his relationship, with God.

He had to rest somewhere else. And, in fact, in the Old Testament, nobody, really, had a relationship, with God, on the basis of, their keeping the law.

And, even Jesus, because you might be thinking, there's one exception, Jesus. And, of course, Jesus, kept the law, but he went, far beyond that, didn't he?

Because, Jesus didn't, simply come and keep the law, there we are, all done. Jesus died, on the cross. The law never commanded that. The law never said, you know, eleventh commandment, and thou shalt die, on the cross.

Jesus went, beyond the law, to make us righteous. Something far better, than law righteousness, through Jesus Christ. Christ. Well, that was the first word, the doing word, and Paul says, that's, the righteousness, of the law.

[24 : 35] And, let's, come to the second word, which he has a lot more, to say about. And, this I'm going to say, is a near word. This is now verse six. But the righteousness, as is by faith, says, notice, it's not Moses saying it, but the righteousness, by faith saying it.

Here's his quote. Do not say in your heart, that's a quote, from Deuteronomy chapter nine. And then he 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 word of faith, we are proclaiming. Now, let's look at this, for a moment.

What is he quoting? It's not quite as simple as it might first appear, because it's putting two quotes together. Now, the Deuteronomy nine quote, is interesting.

I'll dig this one out, if you are able to, you're welcome to look at it as well, but you don't have to. Deuteronomy nine, in the law, this is Moses saying this, the big man on law, and he says, after the Lord your God, has driven out your enemies, do not say to yourself, the Lord has brought me here, to take possession of this land, because of my righteousness.

[26 : 08] That's interesting, isn't it? Back there in the law, Moses was saying, you know, don't get, I'm going to tell you the wrong end, I'm going to tell you a lot of stuff, but don't get the wrong end, under the stick, because you are not blessed, because of your righteousness, and don't begin to think in your heart, it's because of my righteousness, and that's where Paul begins his quote, and then he goes along, into Deuteronomy chapter 30, from verse 11, he doesn't quote him exactly, I'll read you what he does say, now, what I'm commanding you today, is not too difficult for you, or beyond your reach, it is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, who will ascend into heaven, to get it and proclaim it to us, so that we may obey it, nor is it beyond the sea, so that you will have to ask, who will cross the sea to get it, and proclaim it to us, so that we may obey it, no the word is very near you, it is in your mouth, and it is in your heart, so that you may obey it, and if you were,

I don't know if you've got that open, in front of you, but even as it was being read, I don't know whether you thought, because I thought this, hang on a minute, this is all about obedience, that's what it says, the word is in your mouth, and heart that you may obey it, so it is a bit of a conundrum, why Paul chooses that, and I looked in all the commentaries, until I got a headache, and had to go to bed, and what I would like to suggest, is that Paul is taking these words, and saying, in a way they look as though, they're referring to obeying the law, and that's all there is to it, but in fact, when you think about it, Moses is really showing them, a way of relating to God, that isn't the impossibility, of keeping a law, it's something much closer, something which is achievable, and I would like to suggest, and this is my best thought on this, that when he quotes Deuteronomy 30, he's actually, trying to draw from there, a spiritual principle, which is deeper, than obeying the law, it's sort of hidden underneath, that idea, and you might say, hidden inside it, you know, the people listening to Moses, would have thought, hang on a minute, what's he saying, about the way we relate to God, he's being ever so reassuring, the word is near, it's not too difficult for you, well I don't think, you know the Israelites say,

I don't think I quite understand that, but I'm going to trust that, it's not too difficult, and Paul is saying, you see what Moses was really talking about, was the way of faith, so let's come back to Paul, as he takes this idea, and this quotation, and he expands on it, in a Christian way, and he says, the way of the Bible, really if you understand, the depth of it, is not the impossibility, of going up to heaven, and you know, like, who was it, who had huge tasks set for him, was it Jason and the Argonauts, who had to win the king's daughter, by defeating the Minotaur, getting the golden fleece, I don't know, I'm getting lots of things mixed up here, who was it, Hercules, okay, right, he had to do impossible things, is that good enough for us, impossible tasks, and Paul is saying, that's not the way, the Christian life is, or really has ever been, you don't have to climb up to heaven, on the, by the skin of your teeth, by the, by your fingertips, and you don't have to, plumb the depths, you don't have to go down, into the abyss, you don't have to go down, and sort out, all the deep, horrible, terrible things, you don't have to do that, you're not called to do that, you don't have to do that, I think some people, give themselves a headache, by trying to do that, you can't understand, the high things of God, and wrestle with, the deep things of God, you don't have to do that, and Paul, in this tantalizing way, says, you know, you could compare that, you could connect that, with Jesus Christ, because, he came down from heaven, and he did that for us, you don't have to go up to heaven, Christ came down from heaven, it's the incarnation, who shall ascend, don't say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down, or don't say in your heart, who will go down, into the deep, and Paul adds, well that's like bringing up, bringing Christ up from the dead, well he's done that for us, if we try to do that, our little selves, it would be impossible, you don't have to do that, he says, faith, is, so much simpler, and if you like, so much, more, so much easier, you

just, have to believe, you could say, stop trying, and start trusting, as the basis, of the Christian life, the impossible things, have been achieved, by Christ, and, the way, of faith, says, what you're called on to do, is to believe, and you might say, it sounds too good, to be true, you might say, I can't possibly be true, because you've got to work, at anything, haven't you, and Paul says, absolutely wrong, the Christian way, is totally different, Christ's done all the hard work, and the heavy lifting, and he says, you know, just trust me, and Paul, takes the quotation, a little bit further, the quotation, says, the, this, well, the original says, I'll go back to it, the word, is very near you, it is in your mouth, and in your heart, so that you may obey it, and Paul takes that thought, the depth of it, Christianly, and says, I can explain that to you, in Christian ways, the word, well, the word that we're talking about, is a near word, it's not so far away, it's not out of your reach, so that you couldn't, even while you're sitting, where you're sitting this morning, just do what it says, the word is near you, it's, to do with the heart, and to do with the mouth, and he says, it's, the word of faith, is in your heart, because, well, what does he say, the word of faith, let me just see, lost my place, if you confess, with your mouth, verse 9,

[33 : 59] Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart, that God raised him, from the dead, you will be saved, and he, he puts it into, that particular example, you're believing, with your heart, and what you believe, in your heart, you're, the proof of it, is to say it, with your mouth, and if you believe, in your heart, in Jesus Christ, let's say, for example, this particular thing, that, he is raised, from the dead, and if you are prepared, to, commit yourself, in words, Jesus is my Lord, Jesus is Lord, that, that's where you are, that's faith, in action, and you're saved, it really is, remarkably simple, isn't it, do you agree with me, it's not asking you, to do a huge, difficult, terrible thing, and I would ask you, about your heart, and mouth, this morning, is it in your heart, yeah,

I believe, I do believe, in the Lord, Jesus Christ, I do call upon, his name, I'm not trying, to be righteous, by my own efforts, I'm trusting, in what he did, all of it, and are you prepared, to say that, are you prepared, to say, when your friends say, you're not a Christian, are you, and you say, well not really, or you say, yeah, I believe, Jesus is Lord, let's go, to the next section, so, Paul, Paul, is drawing out, from, what actually, is a very powerful principle, that the way, of Christian salvation, is, through faith, in what Christ, has done, and this, what Christ, has done, is brought, to, into your life, and my life, by somebody, telling us about it, and he, picks up, on, the scriptures, which say, let's just see,

I've forgotten, how much I've read, and how much I haven't read, verse 10, says, it is with your heart, that you believe, and are justified, and it is with your mouth, that you confess, and are saved, as the scripture says, anyone who trusts in him, will never be put to shame, and then he says, no, this is everybody, you have to realize, that if this, if the way, the way is the way of faith, it, automatically, removes the barriers, of any sort of favoritism, there is no difference, in particular, verse 12, 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, so that's his quote there, so here's somebody, calling out to the Lord, save me Lord, and then Paul says, now that also has implications, has implications, that didn't used to be there, when Moses, the Moses package ruled, and Israel was the main focus, of God's attention, he says, now that's changed, because now everyone, who calls on the name, of the Lord, will be saved, and he says in verse 14, now how can they call, on the one, they've not believed in, so calling out, means that, somebody's got to have faith, and then he says, well where does faith, come from, how can they believe, in one of whom, they have not heard, faith comes, when you hear, the message, and how can they hear, without someone, preaching to them, and how can they, preach, unless they're sent, he says, this has, huge implications, for the way God, does his business, these days, he's doing it, by sending people, with this message, and he says, the same thing again, verse 16, not all the Israelites, accepted the good news, it says in Isaiah,

Lord who has believed, our message, consequently, verse 17, faith, comes from hearing, the message, and the hearing, of the message, is through the word, of Christ, it says, we're in the age, of mission, we're in the age, of testimony, we're in the age, of God's sending, we're in the age, of a call, going out, that's, what we're happening, and I think, perhaps Paul, is thinking of himself, because they might be saying, thinking of Paul, we're a bit ashamed of you, because you go out, and preach the gospel, to all sorts of, rubbish people, and, don't you think, that's cheapening the gospel, don't you think, that that's a bit shameful, and Paul's saying, absolutely not, this is what God, is about, in these days, and he gives us some quotes, the quote from Isaiah, how beautiful, on

the mountains, are the feet of him, who brings good news, he says, I've got beautiful feet guys, because I'm telling people, about Jesus Christ, and then he, also quotes, Psalm 19, of creation's voice, so this is another quote, it's in verse 18, 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, and if you look that quote up, you think, that doesn't quite, go the way you thought, it was going to go, it's about, God speaking into creation, and what Paul is saying, is just as, the sun shines, on everybody, just as, God reveals himself, in goodness, across the world, so also, the gospel, goes out, across the world, God doesn't have, favorites anymore, he doesn't restrict it, anymore, it isn't just, for the Israelites, or the Swiss, or the English, but for everybody, so we're left, with this situation, of the herald, bringing good news, and hearing, the word of God, so I've just got, a couple of, concluding remarks, there's lots of things, one could say, but here's, here's one observation, so the spiritual process, that God is doing, nowadays, is what, well, it's, sending out, people, to tell, the message, so it's not, sharing experience, it's not saying, if you come to our group, and you meditate, as we're meditating, you will begin, to feel, as we're feeling, and we can share, this experience,

[41 : 17] Paul says, well don't do that, I'll go and tell them, about Jesus Christ, and it's not, first and foremost, welcoming people, into a warm community, come and feel, at home with us, do you feel, at home with us, you feel welcome, that's a good thing, to be, but Paul says, that's not how, the Christian message, is spread, by getting people, to feel at home, it's spread, by telling them, something, about Jesus Christ, that they believe, and it's not, about looking within, Christian message, doesn't say, look inside yourself, go down deep, see what you, see what there is in there, make contact, with the energies, and so and so, that's inside you, it doesn't do that, what it is, is somebody, telling, about Jesus Christ, who is outside, of ourselves, and us believing, the message, that's the spiritual process, that's going on, and let me make, one more comment, which is sort of, implied, and sort of in there, as you think about it, which is, that God, himself, is working, and speaking, through the role, of the speaker, the herald, the missionary, speaking the word, of faith, so, here's the scenario, we could think of,

God, doing all this wonderful, saving work, in Jesus Christ, and then sort of, stopping and folding his arms, and saying, well it's up to you now, but that is not the picture, that's being painted here, the picture being painted here, is that God, continues his saving work, moving into people's lives, touching them, and working, upon them, by his word, here's some of these, verses, how can they preach, unless they're sent, is that verse 15, God sending, God isn't saying, well you decide, whether you want to go or not, I'm busy doing something else, God's sending people, perhaps he sent somebody, to you, to tell you the gospel, and then, notice in verse 17, where he says, hearing comes through, the word of Christ,

I don't think he means, the word about Christ, but it much more, that as, the missionary, is speaking, or as the herald, is speaking, it is the word, that Christ, is speaking, that Christ, is actively, calling, and moving, into your life, as Christ, is proclaimed, even more telling, is verse 20, Isaiah boldly says, I was found, by those who did not, seek me, I revealed myself, to those who did not, ask for me, I, says God, revealed, myself, I, revealed, myself, we're not, dealing with, the abstract, of working through a book, or, a philosophy, in some sort of, merely human way, what we're doing, even this morning, is God, is revealing, himself,

God, is speaking to you, God, is, showing himself, to you, and even more telling, verse 21, which Paul quotes, about this whole matter, all day long, I have held out my hands, to a disobedient, and obstinate people, and who is the I, it's God, and as, the word goes out, God's own hands, as it were, are held out, to you, all day long, says God, I'm holding out my hands, as, the message goes out, I am holding out my hands, to you, please don't be, obstinate, and disobedient, please don't be, dense, and resistant, please, don't say, yes, but, please, hear, the word of faith, as Christ, himself, is presented, and, believe him, submit to him, it's not that difficult, it's not like, having to go up to heaven, or down into the depths, it's believing, this word of faith, as God, calls, and I can simply, ask this morning, will you believe him, do you believe him, do you want to believe him, do you intend to believe him, are you working on, believing on him,