

Romans 10:14-21: God's Gospel Initiative

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[0 : 0 0] Please stand for the reading of God's Word. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to go unless they are sent?

As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah says, So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

But I ask, did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation.

[1 : 0 5] With a foolish nation, I will make you angry. Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, I have been found by those who did not seek me, and I will show myself to those who did not ask for me.

But of Israel, he says, All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thank you for that. Good afternoon on this holiday weekend. It's good to be able to be with you and to be in God's house with God's people, a part of this particular congregation.

I've been to several churches over the last few weeks, but I am glad to be able to call Holy Trinity Church, my church, my church home.

You are my people. We are together in the Gospel for the glory of His name. Let me pray and we'll get started. Father, thank you for this opportunity before you.

[2 : 1 5] May I be found faithful and before your people. May we be fed with bread from on high. Our souls have been refreshed in prayer and in worship.

Now feed us with your Word. May we be strengthened thereby as our prayer in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. What a great text.

Demonstrated by Dave's dipping his foot in it last week. But we're glad that we're here. And really there's great continuity between what we heard on last week and what is before us on this afternoon.

What we have may be described as the Gospel in a nutshell, so to speak. God's blueprint for His Gospel enterprise in and among, and not only that, through men.

And this is for all of the ages. It was good for Paul's day as it is for the day that we live in today.

[3 : 3 3] In one place, in this particular chapter, in these verses, we have the moving parts, if you will, of Gospel engagement, as well as Gospel reception or Gospel rejection.

In one particular passage, we have all of that rolling out. Big picture kind of things in verses 14 through 17.

We may call that God's initiative or God's initiative through the Gospel. In verses 18 through 21, you have what may be called God's indictment, in that those who fail to respond to God's initiative in the Gospel were left with God's indictment because of the Gospel.

And so, we see God's initiative to all included even those who had a history of God's gracious acts in the past.

The refusal, however, left them without excuse. I love that we have somewhat some symmetry between what we've seen in Romans chapters 1 through 3, where Paul ruled out that God's wrath from heaven was rolled out against all of mankind.

[5 : 11] Here we have, in Romans chapters 9 through 11, the fact that God's salvation is for all Jews and Greeks alike.

And again, if you would look, you would see there's also some other similarities. Paul exposes us to some things in chapters 1 through 3. He, as he has done along the way, unpacked them.

And even we see some of those things, even as further definition of the Gospel that we see given to us in chapter 1, verses 16 and 17. What about, then, God's initiative through the Gospel?

Well, God's initiative certainly is a Gospel initiative, is it not? The goal of the Gospel is seen for us in verse 13.

And that's where all of this begins to roll out. Look at verse 13 with me. For everyone who, notice the word, calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[6 : 21] The goal of the Gospel is that people would call on the Lord and thereby be saved. The goal of the Gospel, that's the end game.

In verse 13, what, then, are the necessary steps in getting people to call on the Lord and to be saved? You see that those things are rolled out in the text.

In order for all, that's Jew or Gentile, to call on the name of the Lord and be saved, several things were absolutely necessary.

They were essential in order to get people to call on the name of the Lord and to be saved. And those are laid out for us in the text. And one of the things that he is going to show, and follow me on this, he's going to show that these things that were necessary, in fact, had been done, in particular as it related to the Jewish people.

All of these things that he's going to show, hey, the table has been spread. It's been laid out. They've had the invitation. But what did they do with that invitation?

[7 : 36] And again, so we're in this section that is, Paul is addressing Jewish kinds of issues, their inclusion, but also, why was it, if God had included them, why was it that more many Jewish people coming to faith in Christ?

Did you notice that we have four rhetorical questions in verses 14 through 17? Notice you've got, how then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?

You see the call there that takes us from verse 13 into verse 14. Four rhetorical questions. Again, verse 14 picks up on the call that we see in verse 13.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Bottom line. So, but look there.

Verse 14a. People don't call on one that they don't trust in or believe in, do they? The respected answer from Paul's audience, yeah, you know what, that is impossible.

[8 : 51] No way it couldn't happen. According to verse 13, the Lord saves those who call on his name. But before calling, there must be believed.

Now what he's doing, he's taking this in reverse order. He's backing into it. Huh? Before you can call, you've got to believe.

There has to be an adequate, sufficient trust in order to call on one for help. We know that's true even if it's not for salvation. Person that you don't trust, if they don't have the goods, huh?

You go to the next door or to the next person that can respond to you at the very point of your need. Do you not? But look at, not only that, look at 14b.

People do not believe or trust in one that they've never heard about them. It's impossible for them to do it. If they don't have the needed information about the one that they're calling on, what's the use?

[9 : 55] That you don't know if they can meet the need or not. If you don't have the right information, if they have not heard, no hearing, no believing.

Huh? Look at 14c. People don't hear a message unless there's a spokesperson, unless there is a herald, unless there is a preacher as it concerns the gospel.

It's impossible to hear the message. That message is not proclaimed if it is not preached, huh? Oh, what a word here for us today regarding the priority of proclamation of God's word.

Someone has to do the speaking. Someone needs to be a mouthpiece. Someone needs to speak for God, huh? Initially, as we look at the New Testament, this, of course, was through a herald, a preacher, if you would, that had been entrusted with the message.

And they were to faithfully deliver what had been entrusted to them. Huh? Huh? The gospel is a sacred trust that has been committed to the church of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 22] Huh? While those who are commissioned by the Lord are certainly in view here, God's initiative through the gospel includes the proclamation of other people.

Put it this way, it's not just proclamation. It's not just for the professionals. Huh? I would trust that in our church that we would be a community of proclaimers.

Those who are well-equipped to get the word of the gospel out. Huh? Huh? Huh? We see that this, we see that certainly there were the apostles and certainly the churches built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

But we also see in scripture that there were other proclaimers of the word and the word got out. Matter of fact, turn with me to a couple of places in scripture. Turn with me to Acts chapter 8.

A couple of verses there that I want you to see. But look at verse 1 and then we'll look at verse 5. Acts chapter 8. Verse 1, And Saul approved of his execution, that is Stephen's execution.

[12 : 48] And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. Now check this out. The apostles were back in Jerusalem.

Others were scattered. Look at verses 4 and 5. Now those who were scattered went about, notice what they were doing, preaching the word.

Philip, deacon Philip, well we might say, went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

The word was getting out. The word was being spread abroad. Turn over a few chapters to Acts chapter 11 and we'll see this great church at Antioch, how it in fact came to be.

look at chapter 11 verses 19 through 21. Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch speaking the word, notice, to no one except the Jews.

[14 : 00] But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists, also preaching the Lord Jesus and the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

The word is getting out and these weren't necessarily the so-called, we might call them the professionals who were doing it. The word was being spread abroad through men, perhaps women too, who were proclaimers of God's word.

It's impossible for people to hear the message and to believe without someone proclaiming, someone preaching.

Look at 15a. Preachers don't preach without being sent. No sending. No preaching. Sending comes before a person's proclamation of preaching.

Someone has to be sent for preaching to be done and the sender is none other than the Lord himself. We see this previewed in the sending of the twelve.

[15 : 18] In Mark, let me just read it for you, you may refer to it later, chapter 6, verse 7, and he, that's Christ, called the twelve and began, what, to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits and then we see in verse 12 of that same chapter, Mark 6, so they went out and proclaimed that people should repent, sent out, and they cast out many demons anointed with all and many who were sick and healed them.

Preview of this sending that happened, of course, in the Great Commission, Matthew 28, but also the sending that would apply to all of the Lord's disciples.

here, notice in verse 15, as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

Wow, just think about it, we're in Memorial Day and I'm sure that in times of conflict, particularly as our troops have had the occasion to go to foreign shores, the feet of those who were proclaiming and fighting for a better way of life were welcomed on the shores of Normandy and welcomed in other battlefields when people would come, there were actually literally those who would cheer the so-called liberators and their coming.

They were coming to bring liberation. Think about the going and the beautiful feet of, I pray, this army of God in the earth taking the gospel to where it needs to go.

[17 : 10] Paul quotes Isaiah chapter 52 and verse 7 where this word about good tidings originally was speaking about the release of captives from Babylonian captivity.

Those who heard this good tidings there would be receive it and think about release of exiles. That's what was in view. But the coming of Jesus with the gospel there was also good news of release of another kind.

Those who were in captivity captivity to sin. Preachers of good news had come and that's the point that Paul is trying to get here with the message of salvation.

The glad tidings of salvation from God. Now, what is Paul saying? God's initiative through the gospel was in play in the world.

God had sent heralds of good news. Preachers had proclaimed the good news. People had heard the good news. People had believed the good news and some had called on therefore the Lord for salvation.

[18 : 25] See how we back into this? There was a chain of gospel activity and boy, notice the participants. God was doing his thing.

Believing people who were doing their thing, those who were here and responding to God's call and the gospel was going out. This chain of gospel activity in the world then and friends in the world today.

God's saving initiative. What Paul was trying to get across was to bring all men to a right relationship with themselves and that activity was in play and at the center of this gospel activity was the gospel proclamation.

God's the proclamation of the gospel is literally the heartbeat of the gospel enterprise. Given that reality, how should we then embrace, not only embrace, but be proclaimers in our spheres of influence, whatever they might be, being used of God in those regards.

God's gospel getting out through proclamation. Another way of saying this, and I've already alluded to it, the table was set and all were being invited, but some did not come to the gospel feast.

[20 : 07] feasting rather than feasting on what God had provided, they boasted in their own righteousness.

You see that in chapter 10 verse 3, for being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

What an insult. if you were invited to dinner, I mean, just think, you would spread the table, and then somebody comes in with their lunchbox, and has the nerve to pull it out.

What are you doing? I've just prepared this great feast. Well, I thought I'd bring a snack on my own. Boy, anything less than the feast of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I don't know just about how you describe that.

I mean, that's brown bagging at its worst. But God has laid the feast. Is the feast worse for all? And even the main invitees, Matthew chapter 22, comes into view there.

[21 : 21] But look at verse 16. Paul says it better than I can. But they have not all believed the gospel. Huh? For Isaiah says, who has believed what he has heard from us?

Huh? The gospel had gone out. The gospel preached. The gospel preached had been received by some, but it had been rejected by others.

You say, Pastor Jay, what are you saying? The gospel had played to mixed reviews. Not all who heard, saw it, or received it as good news.

All did not believe. Does the lack of receive of the good news mean that people need to cease sharing it? I mean, have you ever been rebuffed?

I mean, what's good news to you? And a feast for you, for many, you know, they can't stomach it. They don't believe it. does that mean you stop sharing it?

[22 : 29] It's like a show that's been, is it like a show that's been canceled because the ratings are down? Is it like a product that needs recycling or replacing or upgrading because it's not flying off the shelves?

We shouldn't be so subjective, should we? We have been entrusted with the glorious gospel. it will not be received by all, but we need to embrace it and own it nonetheless.

Do we have the luxury of taking it back to research and development and coming up with a new product for a new day? Some would tell you that as it relates to the gospel.

Hey, let's look, we need to, this is okay, but we need to tweak that. You know, they don't believe that anymore. They believed that back then. Let's fix it up. Let's really make it a feast for the contemporary man.

Wow, just think how many times the gospel would have been changed and reordered had that been the case. Not so, huh? If anyone, angel or man, proclaims any other gospel, Paul says, Galatians 1, let him be devoted to destruction.

[23 : 58] While the packaging may need upgrading, the content, friends, must never be altered. You don't have that right.

Huh? Look at verse 17. This is a summary verse. verse. It considers what has been said in verses 14 through 16. Faith comes through hearing the word about Christ.

The word that proclaims his death and lordship through resurrection. That's the word of Christ, about Christ. The gospel had been faithfully preached and it had gone out, Romans chapter 1, to the Jew first.

Romans chapter 2, to the Jew first. God had been getting faithful and getting his word out to his people of old. But the gospel had been met with rebellion by many of the Jewish people.

Messengers had been sent out. The message of Christ had been proclaimed. The church indeed in that day had been on mission. Though preachers had been sent with the message of Christ, many of God's people of old did not believe.

[25 : 14] Among those who had not obeyed the gospel, many Jews, not all believed. the gospel enterprise in a nutshell here.

That demands, friends, our gospel engagement, our understanding what is here. And again, these are sort of the unspoken imperatives of the text.

We've got the information, but also there's some unspoken imperatives as far as what our engagement needs to be on the basis of what we see here. Look at verse 18 through 21.

God's initiative through the gospel, but also God's indictment because of the gospel. Notice, don't you love Paul? He picks up on the hearing twice in verse 17.

He picks up on that in verse 18. But I ask, have they not what? Heard heard. Indeed, they have, he says.

[26 : 25] It's not that they haven't heard because they had heard. They had heard. The gospel had traveled far and wide.

It had covered, even in that day, lots of ground. And notice the scripture that Paul uses here. again, this acceptable rhetorical kind of usage of this verse here.

Their voice in Psalm 19 had gone out to what? All the earth. Their words to the ends of the world.

Of course, if you're familiar with this verse, you know that Paul is speaking about, I mean, that the psalmist is speaking about natural revelation that speaks clearly and profoundly for its creator, our God.

But, so, just as there had been a universal global witness to God in creation, so an adequate, pervasive, widespread witness had gone out through the preaching of Christ.

[27 : 40] Paul and others had proclaimed Christ. The word, the gospel had traveled far and wide. God's word had gone out to Jews and Gentiles alike in the Roman Empire.

The word about Christ had touched the lives of many. So, again, taken in this sense, the verse would have made good sense to those who heard. The spirit of what was said in the psalm fit Paul's purposes and thus he uses it as far as the widespread witness of the gospel.

The gospel had been preached widely and heard by many. The gospel had traveled. Paul speaks about this similarly in Colossians chapter 1. Let me read verses 5 and 6.

Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you as indeed in the whole world and is bearing fruit and growing as it does among you.

Since the day you heard it, it understood the grace of God and truth. The gospel had gone out, touched many, gone out broadly. Jewish unbelief was not because they had not heard.

[29 : 03] They had heard, but according to verse 19, neither was it because of a lack of understanding. Look at verse 19. And I asked, did not Israel understand?

First, Moses says, I will make you jealous of those who are noticed, not a nation, and with a foolish nation, I will make you angry.

Paul calls two witnesses, first Moses, then Isaiah. Moses, the premier spokesperson for Israel in his day. Israel did know.

The dynamics at play in the nation of Israel had been foretold by God in Deuteronomy. They should have understood that. This was a sign of God's judgment from their own scriptures.

Israel should have known that God was at work in and through the gospel as it went out beyond the borders of that nation into the broader world.

[30 : 09] Their own scriptures had noted that God would provoke them to jealousy by outsiders. He would anger them by people who did not really understand.

This certainly was the case in the book of Acts, and let me indulge you a bit. Turn again with me to Acts chapter 13. I want you to see this because it really drives home the point of what Paul is saying.

The principle that Paul operated on, as we see in Romans chapter 1, the gospel, Jew first, but also to the Greek.

Look at chapter 13, verses 44 and following. the next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with what? Jealousy, and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

[31 : 16] And Paul and Barnabas, notice what these proclaimers, these preachers, they spoke out boldly saying, it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you since you thrust aside and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

Behold, we're turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I've made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation. Where?

Ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord and as many as were appointed to eternal life believe.

Oh, look at the gospel at work. God sending with a message, people hearing, people believing, some rejecting, even in our work day.

Read the rest of that when you get home, but just a beautiful example of what's being said. An example of what we're seeing, what we've seen in 14 through 17 in our text today.

[32 : 25] An illustration of it right before us in scripture. Verse 20, God, who was willing, he was waiting and ready to be found, and he was revealed himself to the Gentiles who had not sought after him.

Look at verse 20, then Isaiah, here's witness number two, one witness from the law, another witness from the prophets, as far as his point. Isaiah is so bold to say, I have been found by those who did not seek me.

I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me. Again, Paul's reinforcing his point. It's reinforced by what we see in 20.

Isaiah's the witness, speaking more boldly than Moses. The quote is Isaiah 65 and 1. Those who were not seeking God found him.

God had revealed himself to those who did not ask for him. Wow. It's gone out.

[33 : 32] They heard. They should have understood. They're blinded by their unbelief. But then, as we look at verse 21, notice divine posture in this verse.

Of Israel, he says, and again, this is Isaiah 65 and 2, all day long, I have held out my hands to a disobedient contrary people.

it's the arms of a father reaching out to children without the appropriate response from them.

Israel is pictured as being sought out by God. And here it was, the Gentiles who did not seek God found him.

Here, God is seeking Israel and she's resisting. You know, God's appealing. Israel's ignoring all day long, prolonged, sustained appeal.

[34 : 57] The people are described as disobedient and contrary people. They're stubborn. God is gracious.

They are stubborn. Isn't that the nature of grace and mercy? That doesn't give up when it's rebuffed?

Huh? What a striking image. Wonderful, merciful God that's reaching out.

Oh, what's pictured here is realized even in the cross. God reaches out to a world in need and there's an appeal through the cross.

Such was God's posture to his people who were paralyzed by unbelief. Does what we see here not represent people in our day?

[36 : 12] Those of us who have been entrusted with the gospel, who have the trust that's been committed unto us in our day? Believe it or not, there are gospel-ready people.

Gospel-ready people, I think of Acts chapter 8 when there was this divine rendezvous of the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip, here was a man with the message, a man who in a sense was hearing but not understanding and God calls them to meet up.

Did you know there are people like that in our world today who are gospel-ready people? But also like Israel, they're gospel-resistant people.

And your experience may be that you're meeting more gospel-resistant people than gospel-ready people. How might our praying earnestly bring us into greater or more frequent contact with those who are gospel-ready kind of people?

Huh? So what do we have here, Pastor Jay? Here we have the drama of gospel enterprise that we are engaged in as people who are on mission.

[37 : 37] Huh? As people who in our day envisioned the city of Chicago transformed by the power of the gospel. Our engagement includes proclaiming Christ, people hearing about Christ, people believing on Christ and trusting, calling on his name.

Huh? But some, far too many, don't believe. In a nutshell, the grand and glorious gospel enterprise.

The Lord sends preachers, preachers preach Christ, people believe, people confess in Christ as Lord and say, from among all peoples. Huh? Jew and Gentile alike.

But the stark reality that some do not believe. Huh? So what must we do? About to close.

Just allow me to bullet point some things that are essential for us in a gospel community with gospel proclaimers who do it regularly, professionally, but also at the lay level.

[38 : 52] You and I must, of course, get the gospel right. The message of God's rescue from just condemnation. Rescue, yes, from his wrath, present and future, through the saving work of his son.

To all who believe, get the gospel right. additions to this simple message must be resisted at all calls. Not only must we get the gospel right, but we got to get the gospel out.

Huh? It necessarily involves people, your engagement and mine. Proclamation is at the heartbeat of the glorious gospel enterprise that we've been entrusted with.

Being on mission means understanding the message, sharing the message, to all who will hear, believe, and receive.

May we model the posture that we see of God in verse 21. May we be his agents of mercy, even in the midst of unbelief of all kind, blind unbelief, sophisticated unbelief, whatever way that manner that unbelief manifests.

[40 : 08] it manifests itself. The Lord calls his people to faithful gospel proclamation, even in the midst of blind unbelief.

Let's pray. Father, we look to you this afternoon. Pray that you would be glorified in us. We praise you, Lord, that for this picture, I pray that it would be really riveted in our hearts and in our minds in verse 21 of a God who reaches out in a prolonged, sustained kind of way.

And may we not be weary in proclaiming the gospel. Give us wisdom how to do it. Help us to have divine appointments with those that you are calling to yourself.

Those who are waiting for a word, a message. Perhaps those who are reading like the Ethiopian eunuch were, or in other ways are gospel curious.

Help us find them, lead us to them. It's our prayer in Christ's name. Let's stand. Aren't you glad that we have a wonderful family. Thank you. Thank you.