



When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do

"O Sinner, Where Art Thou?"

Romans 10:14-21

God is evangelistic.

From the beginning He has been revealing His salvation to the human race. Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, God came to them in the Garden of Eden and offered them what Iraneaus, in the second century after Jesus, called the *proto-evangel*, meaning the 'first Gospel.' He was referring to Genesis 3:15,

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Commenting on this, William MacDonald said,

It predicts the perpetual hostility between Satan and the woman (representing all mankind), and between Satan's seed (his agents) and her Seed (the Messiah). The woman's Seed would crush the Devil's head, a mortal wound spelling utter defeat. This wound was administered at Calvary when the Savior decisively triumphed over the Devil. Satan, in turn, would bruise the Messiah's heel. The heel wound here speaks of suffering and even of physical death, but not of ultimate defeat. So Christ suffered on the cross, and even died, but He arose from the dead, victorious over sin, hell, and Satan. The fact that He is called the woman's Seed may contain a suggestion of His virgin birth.

Another writer said, "these words spoken by God contain the first promise of redemption in the Bible. Everything else in the Bible flows from these words in Genesis 3:15. As the acorn contains the mighty oak, so these words contain the entire plan of salvation."

The great English preacher Charles Simeon called this verse "the sum and summary of the whole Bible."

When Charles Wesley wrote the familiar carol *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing* he included a verse based on Genesis 3:15. Modern hymnals often omit this verse, which is unfortunate since it contains excellent theology:

*Come, Desire of Nations, come, Fix in us Thy humble home.
Rise the woman's conquering Seed, Bruise in us the serpent's head.
Adam's likeness now efface, Stamp Thine image in its place,
Second Adam from above, Reinstale us in Thy love,*

When we studied the life of Abraham we talked about the Abrahamic Covenant. Included in that Covenant was a promise that through Abraham's seed **all** peoples would be blessed. They would be blessed because through Abraham's seed would come the Savior promised by God in the *proto-evangel*.

We saw, last time, that Jews and Gentiles were saved exactly the same way, by calling on the name of the Lord. The question that arises from that is, "How does someone call upon the name of the Lord?"

The remainder of chapter ten answers that and more.

Romans 10:14 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?

Romans 10:15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Who are "they" in these verses? In the immediately previous verses Paul explained that *everyone* - Jew and Gentile - is saved the same way. "They" are, therefore, Jews **and** Gentiles. "They" are all people everywhere.

This, then, is God's simple, straightforward plan for evangelism. To quote MacDonald again,

- God sends out His servants
- They preach the word of faith [i.e., that the believing sinner is declared righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ]
- Sinners [without distinction as to ethnicity] hear God's offer of life in Christ
- Some of those who hear believe the message

- Those who believe call on the Lord.
- Those who call on Him are saved

The quote in verse fifteen is from Isaiah 52:7. It's original application was the announcement to the people of Judah that their captivity and exile in Babylon had ended. **How much greater is the announcement to sinners of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues that their captivity to sin and death in the kingdom of Satan has ended at the cross!**

Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

Who are "they" in this verse? Well, certainly this is a true statement about both Jews and Gentiles. When the Gospel is preached, not everyone believes.

I think, however, that the "they" in this verse and the following ones is to be understood as being Jews. There are at least things that point to this being about the Jews:

1. The overall context of this chapter was set in verse one where Paul said his heart's desire for Israel was that the Jews be saved.
2. In verse sixteen Paul quoted from the famous passage in Isaiah fifty-three that describes the rejection of Jesus Christ by His own people, the nation of Israel.
3. And because the general context of these remaining verses is about Israel and her rejection of the Gospel while Gentiles were, in great numbers, receiving it.

We are Gentiles. We don't see why it was a problem that the Gospel was going out to Jew and Gentile alike, and that Gentiles were being saved in great numbers while Jews were, for the most part, hardening their hearts against Jesus. But if we were Jews and had the whole weight of history and Scripture that indicated salvation was to the Jew first, we'd be severely troubled and in need of a biblical explanation.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

This is similar to the saying of Jesus, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Auditory hearing is necessary, but it is hearing *in the heart* that

makes the difference. For the most part, Jews did not have ears to hear; and certainly their leaders had stopped their ears, refusing to hear.

So, in verse sixteen Paul quoted the prophecy that Jews would not recognize their Messiah and would not “believe” the “report” about Him. The “report” might be a reference to the facts of His ministry - that He healed and performed the miracles that were prophesied of the Messiah.

Since the Jews for the most part, and especially the leadership of the nation, did not believe, they were not being saved! They held on to their own belief that righteousness was of the law and not of faith.

They “heard,” just not with the heart.

I hate to be so repetitive but the issue here was that Jews needed to be shown from their Scriptures that preaching the righteousness of faith to Gentiles **was** God’s plan. They needed to come to the conclusion that the apostle Peter had come to - that Jews needed to be saved the same way Gentiles were being saved, by grace through faith and not by works of the law.

Romans 10:18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."

The Jews had definitely heard the Gospel. I always marvel that all the first Christians were Hebrew Christians! The preaching of the apostles filled Jerusalem.

Paul quotes from Psalm nineteen which speaks of the testimony of creation. Just as the ignorant Gentile had the witness of creation all around him and was without excuse as to the glory of God, in a much greater way the willfully ignorant Jew had the witness of the Gospel all around him and was without excuse.

Romans 10:19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."

What was it that “Israel” claimed to “not know?” In context, they were claiming to “not know,” meaning to not *understand how*, God could save Gentiles apart from conversion to Judaism. How He could save them directly, without Jewish intervention.

Paul found a verse in Deuteronomy (32:21) and quoted it to show that this saving of Gentiles was prophesied with the hope that God’s own people would become jealous.

Jealousy is not always a bad thing! God is sometimes described as jealous over us. If God can be jealous, then jealousy cannot always be bad.

Sadly, in their jealousy the Jews became angry rather than repentant. So God went directly to the Gentiles with His offer of salvation.

Paul had something to say about this at the end of the Book of Acts.

Acts 28:25 So when they [the Jews] did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

Acts 28:26 saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY: "HEARING YOU WILL HEAR, AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE, AND NOT PERCEIVE;

Acts 28:27 FOR THE HEARTS OF THIS PEOPLE HAVE GROWN DULL. THEIR EARS ARE HARD OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM." '

Acts 28:28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

The next verse in Romans ten, verse twenty, says the same thing:

Romans 10:20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."

You and I weren’t attending synagogue. We weren’t observing the Sabbath. *We weren’t Kosher!* God “found” us by sending someone to us (or something someone had produced to read or watch or listen to) with the Gospel and we were saved.

Romans 10:21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."

Gentiles who were not seeking God were being found by Him and saved. Jews to whom Jesus had come offering eternal life and the kingdom on earth had rejected Him.

Do you realize how painful it is to stretch out your hands for any length of time? God employs this word picture to describe in human terms something of the greatness and strength of His love for Israel.

- In His love for Israel, He strove with them right up until the Roman invasion of 70AD.
- In His love for Israel, He is saving individual Jews alongside Gentiles during this Church Age
- In His love for Israel, He will spare a remnant of the nation during the coming Great Tribulation
- In His love for Israel, at the Second Coming of Jesus, at the end of the Great Tribulation, all Israel will be saved!

Some have made the devotional application that the outstretched arms are those of Jesus, on the Cross, reaching out to save His own people, Israel, and all mankind.

All throughout the Bible God is depicted as seeking to save lost sinners. We saw the *proto-gospel* in Genesis. The Bible ends with God seeking sinners in the last chapter of the Revelation where we read that the Spirit and the bride - the church - say "Come," inviting whosoever will believe to drink of the living water of God's salvation.

Earlier Paul had stated that, because of sin, no one seeks after God (Romans 3:11). God, however, is seeking sinners. His seeking sinners is accomplished by His sending messengers.

You and I are those messengers. Wherever we find ourselves, that is where we have been sent. Every believer is a "preacher" according to verse fourteen. It's not a formal preaching, although it can certainly include that. It is simply our sharing the Gospel with others.

It is simply our sharing Jesus with others!

Here is, I believe, what our attitude ought to be. We ought to believe that the Gospel is a sincere offer of salvation to “whosoever will believe” because the Bible says that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world - especially those who believe. His death was sufficient to save everyone and it is effective in saving those who, by grace, accept freely the gift of eternal life.