

XXIII. Faith Comes by Hearing

November 1/2/3, 2016

Romans 10:14-21

Aim: To appreciate that God's appointed means of evangelism is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that many might hear, understand, believe, and be saved.

Verse 14, with its 'therefore,' followed by a question, marks the beginning of a new unit of thought. The immediate point of contact is with the word 'call upon' in the quotation of Joel 2:28 in v. 13. That quotation asserts that salvation is a matter of calling on the Lord. In vv. 14ff., Paul asks whether such calling on the name of the Lord is really possible. He begins by analyzing the conditions that are necessary for such calling on the Lord in a series of rhetorical questions (vv. 14-15a). He then makes clear that every condition – except one – has been met. What is the missing ingredient? Faith. For calling on the name of the Lord is another way of saying 'believe'; and it is this humble acceptance for oneself of the gospel that is missing (v. 16). Verse 16 is therefore the center of this paragraph and expresses its main point.

But of whom is Paul speaking in this paragraph? He explicitly identifies 'Israel' as the object of his criticism in v. 19. But up to that point, Paul has used indefinite third person plural verbs, making it likely that in perhaps all of vv. 14-18 he is thinking of people generally. The third person plural verbs in v. 14 take the reader back inevitably to the last use of such verbs in chapter 10, in Paul's indictment of the Jews for their ignorance of, and failure to submit to, God's righteousness in vv. 2-3. Verses 14-21 seem to continue that indictment, as Paul removes any possible excuse that the Jews might have for their failure to respond to God's offer of righteousness in Christ. Probably, then, Paul writes generally in vv. 14-18 about the relationship of all people to the message of the gospel while at the same time thinking especially of the application of these points to Israel. His point, then, is that Israel cannot plead ignorance: God has made His purposes clear in both the OT (note the six OT quotations in vv. 14-21) and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. So the fault rests with Israel: she has been 'disobedient and obstinate' (v. 21; cp. v. 16).

A. The Chain of Evangelism (Romans 10:14-17)

1. Rhetorical Chain (10:14-15a)

¹⁴*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?*

¹⁵*And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*

Paul gives a series of related questions, which are very important. The text bears heavily on the missions outreach of the church. This series of *how* questions follows all Paul said about divine election in Romans 9. It is appropriate that chapter 10 follows chapter 9, because chapter 10 addresses one of the most common objections raised by people about the doctrine of election. Evangelism is one of the greatest privileges that God gives to the church. God could have preached His Word from the clouds without any human participation, but He chose the means to accomplish it, chiefly, the foolishness of preaching. God gave us the unspeakable privilege of participating in His majestic program of redemption, which He planned from the foundation of the world. No preacher is indispensable. God does not need preachers to accomplish His purposes of redemption. He did not need Isaiah, He did not need Jeremiah, and He did not need

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the apostle Paul. God has given men the most sacred vocation possible—carrying this treasure in earthly vessels.

Verse 14 and the first part of v. 15 contain a series of four parallel rhetorical questions, each beginning with the interrogative ‘how.’ By repeating the verb from the end of one question at the beginning of the next, Paul creates a connected chain of steps that must be followed if a person is to be saved (v. 13). Paul in v. 13 has asserted a universally applicable principle; that salvation is granted to all who call on the Lord. But people cannot call on the Lord if they do not believe in Him. They cannot believe in Him if they do not hear the word that proclaims Christ. And that word will not be heard unless someone preaches it. But a preacher is nothing more than a herald, a person entrusted by another with a message. Thus preaching, finally, cannot transpire unless someone sends the preachers.

Verses 14-15 link back to verses 12 and 13 (by the opening, ‘Therefore...’ and pick up on ‘call on Him/His name.’ A powerful dramatic effect is established by four key questions beginning ‘How...?’, and but the carry over of the keywords ‘believe,’ ‘hear,’ and ‘proclaim’ into the next question. These words are a matchless account of God’s way of bringing ‘salvation’ to man. God sends a preacher of the Gospel focused on Christ. Those who ‘hear’ then ‘believe’ that ‘word’ and ‘call’ on Christ the Lord for salvation. Put another way, *calling* on the Lord depends on *believing*, *believing* depends on *hearing*, *hearing* depends on *proclaiming*, *proclaiming* depends on *being sent* (by God).

Viewed from the opposite direction of the questions as presented, Paul is saying that if God did not send preachers no one could hear, if no one could hear no one could believe, if no one could believe no one could call on the Lord, and if no one could call on Him no one could be saved. The capstone of Paul’s argument in this passage is that a clear message that gives understanding of the truth must precede saving faith.

‘How then shall they call on Him whom they have not believed?’ (v. 14a). When I face the deepest problem of human existence—escaping from the wrath to come—why would I put any trust in or call upon somebody unless I first believed He was able to redeem me? Belief is a precondition, a necessary condition, to calling upon Him. ‘And how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard?’ (v. 14b). Millions have never heard the name of Jesus, and they are not going to put their trust in someone they know nothing about. They cannot possibly believe in Jesus because they know nothing about Him. Saving faith requires information. That is why the church is commanded to go to every corner of the world and make that message plain to all people. ‘How shall they hear without a preacher?’ (v. 14c). The answer to Paul’s questions is that they will not. No one is going to hear about Jesus unless somebody tells them. Nobody is going to believe a gospel they have never heard, and without a preacher they will never hear it. ‘And how shall they preach unless they are sent?’ (v. 15a). The Latin word for ‘send’ is *missia*, from which we get the word *mission*. Missionaries are sent. We see throughout the pages of the Old Testament that God anointed prophets and sent them to people. Just so, missionaries cannot go unless somebody supports and sends them. Not everyone in the church is called to be a missionary, but every member of the church is responsible to make sure that the missionary activity gets done. We all have a part to play in that endeavor.

Here Paul the apostle presents himself as a prophet of liberation. The words ‘the words of faith which we preach’ and ‘How can they preach unless they are sent?’ repeat the words ‘preach’ and

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‘sent’ the prophet Isaiah uses of himself (Isaiah 61:1: ‘the LORD has anointed me to *preach* good news to the poor. He has *sent* me to bind up the broken hearted’; cp. Lk. 4:18).

2. Quotation of Isaiah 52:7 (10:15b)

As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’

The quotation of Isaiah 52:7 at the end of v. 15 serves two functions. First, it provides scriptural confirmation of the necessary role of preaching. Second, however, it implicitly suggests that the last condition for salvation listed by Paul in vv. 14-15a has been met: God has sent preachers. Significant for this latter point is the use of the verb ‘preach good news’ in the Isaiah text. Paul’s use of this passage would inevitably suggest an allusion to the preaching of the gospel by himself and other ‘authorized messengers’ sent out by God (e.g., apostles) – especially since the passage was widely viewed as prophetic of the messianic age.

Paul’s buttressing citation ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who *bring good news*’ also springs from Isaiah (Is. 52:7). It is not the physical feet of God’s preachers that are beautiful, but the wondrous glad tidings of good things that those feet carry to the ends of the earth. In this text Isaiah speaks originally of those like himself who tell the good news to Israel in exile in Babylon that her God reigns and that at last she is to be liberated and restored to her homeland. Paul sees Isaiah’s prophecy fulfilled in God’s sending forth of evangelists (like himself), who proclaim the ‘word of Christ’ that liberates captives from prison.

Paul gives the reason why, if election is true, we should preach. We preach not simply as a matter of duty but because God gives us the blessed privilege of having beautiful feet in the eyes of those who hear and respond to the gospel.

3. Break in the Chain (10:16a)

¹⁶*But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*

In this verse Paul identifies the link in the chain of requirements leading to salvation that is missing for so many people: faith (cp. v. 14a). While Paul has been speaking generally of all people in vv. 14-15, here he probably focuses especially on Jews. The verse therefore is central to Paul’s argument in vv. 14-21 and indeed, in 9:30-10:21, reasserting as it does Paul’s basic accusation of his Jewish brothers and sisters (see also 9:32 and 10:3). The ‘not all’ (*οὐ πάντες, οὐ πάντες*) is a litotes: ‘only a few.’ One of the reasons Paul chooses to put the matter this way is to echo the ‘remnant’ theology he has introduced in 9:6b (cp. also 9:27): ‘not all those who belong to Israel are Israel.’ Paul’s break in the change of vv. 14-15a seems a bit premature, since in vv. 18-21 he continues to do what he began in v. 15b, identifying links in the chain that are in place. But Paul could not resist the natural contrast between the truth of the publication of the good news (v. 15b) and the Jews’ tragic reaction to it. Surprisingly, Paul characterizes this reaction as ‘disobedience’ rather than unbelief. But Paul has linked faith and obedience since the beginning of the letter (see 1:5, ‘the obedience of faith’), and he is especially concerned in this context to show that Israel’s situation is the result not simply of a relatively passive unbelief, but of a definite and culpable refusal to respond to God’s gracious initiative (see 10:3 and 21).

‘Heed’ (‘obey’) translates *hupakouō*, which has the basic meaning of listening attentively and the derived meaning of submission or obedience. Tragically, the offer of salvation that is proclaimed to all men is not heeded by all men.

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It is evident from the book of Acts, as well as from experience, that not all who *hear* the gospel *obey* its message directing their faith Christwards. In Greek the words ‘hear’ (*akouō*) and ‘obey’ (*hupakouō*) are similar so that Paul intends a wordplay between ‘How will they *hear* without a preacher?’ (v. 14) and ‘But not all *obey* the gospel.’ How does one ‘obey’ the gospel? Paul answered that question in advance when he wrote of ‘the obedience *of faith*’ (1:5). God speaks the gospel (through evangelists) summoning the hearers to obey Him, that is, by directing faith towards Christ. ‘Obeying’ the gospel, however, is not the same as ‘obeying’ the Law (see vv. 6-7). The former calls us into a grace-based relationship of personal trust in Christ who has come, died, and been raised for our salvation. The latter, however, while initiated by grace, required Israelites to fulfill the code of Law given by God at Mt. Sinai which, on account of sin, the people failed to do (see 7:7-25; cp. 2 Cor. 3:6-11).

Paul’s point is that not everybody who hears the gospel obeys, or embraces, the gospel. The primary means God uses to awaken faith in the hearts of the elect is the preaching of the gospel. Faith comes through the Word, specifically, the preaching of the Word. There is a difference between a necessary condition and a sufficient condition. A sufficient condition is one in which something need only be present for the effect to take place. If we apply that to what Paul is saying, the preaching of the Word is a necessary condition for faith, but it’s not a sufficient condition. You can’t have faith without it, but you can still have unbelief even with it.

4. Quotation of Isaiah 53:1 (10:16b)

For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’

Paul considers Israel’s disobedience and unbelief as two sides of the same coin, as the quotation from Isaiah 53:1 in v. 16b makes clear: ‘Lord, who has *believed* our report?’ Paul reproduces the LXX exactly, which accurately translates the MT. The quotation of this same text in John 12:39 suggests that it may have been a common early Christian ‘testimonium’ used to explain and justify in Scripture the Jews’ unbelief. Perhaps Paul also sees the text as particularly appropriate since it closely follows Is. 52:7, which he has just quoted in v. 15b. As Paul does on three other occasions in Romans 9-11 (see also 9:27, 29; 10:20), Paul names Isaiah as the biblical author.

5. Summary of the Chain (10:17)

¹⁷*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

This verse seems awkwardly placed. The introductory ‘therefore’ and its content suggest that it is a conclusion drawn from the chain of salvation requirements in vv. 14-15a. The identification of the one point in the chain at which Israel has fallen short in v. 16 is premature, interrupting Paul’s assertion of those points that have found fulfillment. What Paul says in v. 17 is therefore a necessary transition back into this topic. It picks up immediately the connection between ‘believing’ and ‘hearing/report’ that the quotation of Is. 53:1 in v. 16b assumes and restates the second step in the series of salvation requirements: faith comes as a result of ‘hearing’ (cp. v. 14b). The last part of v. 17 then restates and expands on the third step in that sequence (v. 14c): hearing, the kind of hearing that can lead to faith, can only happen if there is a definite salvific word from God that is proclaimed. That word through which God is now proclaiming the availability of eschatological salvation and which can awaken faith in those who hear it is ‘the word of Christ’: the message whose content is the lordship and resurrection of Christ (see 10:8-9).

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The divine sequence is the proclamation of ‘the word of Christ’ which is ‘heard’ then ‘believed.’ Put Paul’s way, ‘faith’ comes from ‘what is heard’ and ‘what is heard’ comes ‘through the word of Christ.’ Most probably by ‘word of Christ’ Paul means both ‘the word *about* Christ’ (His incarnation and resurrection – see vv. 6-7) and also ‘the word that comes *from* Christ’ (through evangelists).

Salvation does not come by intuition, mystical experience, meditation, speculation, philosophizing, or consensus but by ‘hearing’ and having ‘faith in the word of Christ.’ To proclaim the saving ‘word of Christ’ is therefore the central and essential purpose of evangelism.

B. The Failure of Israel (Romans 10:18-21)

1. Israel Has Heard the Gospel (10:18)

a) Rhetorical Question (10:18a)

¹⁸*But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have...*

Paul now resumes his wrestle with Israel’s failure (as a nation) to embrace the gospel, picking up this theme from verses 1-3 and 9:1-5. They have ‘not obeyed’ the gospel (v. 16). Is this because they have ‘not heard’ the gospel? This would excuse them, perhaps. But no. They have, ‘indeed,’ heard.

Verse 17 has focused attention on the critical step of ‘hearing’ in the sequence of steps leading to salvation. Paul now goes back to this step and asks ‘have they not heard?’ Probably here again (as in vv. 14-15) Paul is speaking generally about all people but with special reference to Jews. Paul puts his question in a form that makes it legitimate to paraphrase it with an assertion: people have heard. Paul buttresses this assertion by quoting Psalm 19:4.

b) Quotation of Ps. 19:4 (10:18b)

...for ‘Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.’

In keeping with his concern throughout this paragraph and Romans 9-11 generally, Paul substantiates his assertion with an appeal to Scripture: ‘Indeed,’ Paul says, they have heard, for Psalm 19:4 asserts that ‘their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words unto the ends of the inhabited world. In other words, even David understood the universal parameters of God’s offer of salvation, which already ‘has gone out’ (a past tense) ‘to all the earth.’

Paul’s use of this text raises two questions. First, what is Paul’s purpose in using a passage that extols God’s revelation in nature (as Ps. 19:1-6 does) in this context? The implied object of the verb ‘heard’ in Paul’s question must be ‘the word of Christ’; ‘their voice’ and ‘their words’ in the Psalm verse must then refer to the voices and words of Christian preachers (see vv. 14-16). Paul is not, then, simply using the text according to its original meaning. His application probably rests on a general analogy: as God’s word of general revelation has been proclaimed all over the earth, so God’s word of special revelation, in the gospel, has been spread all over the earth. His intention is not to interpret the verse of the Psalm, but to use its language, with the ‘echoes’ of God’s revelation that it awakes, to assert the universal preaching of the gospel.

But this brings us to our second question. How could Paul assert, in 57 AD, that the gospel has been proclaimed ‘to the whole earth’? First, as the word *oikoumenē* in the second line of the quotation may suggest, Paul may be thinking in terms of the Roman Empire of his day rather

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than of the entire globe. Second, Paul's focus might be corporate rather than individualistic; he asserts not that the gospel has been preached to every person but to every nation, and especially to both Jews and Gentiles. Both these considerations may well be relevant. But perhaps it would be simply to think that Paul engages in hyperbole, using the language of the Psalm to assert that very many people by the time Paul writes Romans have had an opportunity to hear. It cannot be lack of opportunity, then, that explains why so few Jews have come to experience the salvation God offers in Christ.

2. Israel Has Understood the Gospel (10:19-21)

a) *Rhetorical Question (10:19a)*

¹⁹*But I ask, did Israel not understand?*

Again Paul asks plaintively, 'Surely Israel did not understand.' His inference, however, is that Israel did 'understand' just as she had, indeed, 'heard.'

The repetition of the opening words of v. 18 – 'but I say' – marks out v. 19 as a second step in Paul's argument that began in v. 19. There he showed that it was not lack of opportunity to have that prevented Jews from being saved. Now he takes a step further and, abandoning the opening sequence of steps, probes deeper into the nature of the Jews' 'hearing.' Specifically, he raises and rejects the possibility that this hearing was a merely superficial hearing, not accompanied by genuine understanding. No, Paul affirms, Israel has 'known.'

Finally, Paul points out that Israel was ignorant of the predictions of their own Scriptures, a truth implied throughout the previous part of this chapter. But ironically, the ignorance of Israel was not based on lack of truth; it was not because the people 'did not know.' They did know, and consequently had no excuse for not understanding and accepting God's universal parameters of salvation.

Paul explicitly uses the word 'Israel' to make clear for the first time his 'real' subject in this paragraph. At the same time, the use of the word adds emphasis to his point: Can it really be that *Israel*, the recipient of God's numerous and detailed prophecies about His plans and purposes, does not 'know'? What it was that Israel 'knows,' as the subsequent context suggests, is that God could very well act in such a way that the preaching of Christ would result in the inclusion of the Gentiles and in judgment upon Israel (see the OT quotations in vv. 19b-21). This Israel knows from her own Scriptures: her 'ignorance' then (v. 3), consists in her willful refusal to recognize the fulfillment of these texts in the revelation of God's righteousness in Christ. Israel, Paul suggests, 'sees, but does not perceive; hears, but does not comprehend' (Is. 6:9; cp. Mk. 4:12; Jn. 12:40; Acts 28:26-27).

b) *Quotation of Deuteronomy 32:21 (10:19b)*

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

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21b as the first step ('Moses *first* says') in his demonstration from Scripture of what Israel knew. The verse is part of Moses' 'song' to Israel, in which he rehearses the history of God's gracious acts on Israel's behalf and Israel's stubborn and sinful response to those acts. The words Paul quote state God's 'equivalent' response to Israel's idolatry: because Israel has made God jealous with 'what is no god' (v. 21a), God will make Israel 'jealous' (*παραζηλωω*, *parazēloō*) with what is 'no people.' The phrase 'no people' was probably the

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catch phrase that drew Paul's attention to this text, since he quotes the Hosea prophecy about those 'not my people' becoming the people of God in 9:25-26. Paul sees in the words a prophecy of the mission to the Gentiles; the inclusion of Gentiles in the new people of God stimulates the Jews to a jealousy and causes Israel to respond in wrath against this movement in salvation history. From their own Scriptures, then, Israel should have recognized that God was at work in the gospel.

God's blessing of Gentiles who believe in Him would make His chosen people jealous and angry. Some fifteen hundred years before Paul wrote this letter, Moses declared that the salvation message was to reach Gentiles as well as Jews.

Why should anyone be surprised that the gospel is being proclaimed to the Gentiles? This was not a last-minute switch in God's plans. God had told the people of Israel that He would make them jealous by taking their proffered benefits across the border to all nations. Paul has in view here the universal proclamation of the gospel so that, as Paul said earlier, 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved' (v. 13).

c) Quotation of Isaiah 65:1 (10:20)

²⁰*Then Isaiah is so bold as 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.'*

But it is not only the 'law' that anticipates the gospel and Israel's negative reaction to it; the 'prophets' bear witness to the same truth. In fact, Paul suggests, the prophetic text testifies even more clearly to these points. Paul quotes from Isaiah 65:1, a verse that in its context refers to God's making Himself known to the people of Israel. As he did with Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 in 9:25-26, Paul takes OT texts that speak of Israel and applies them, on the principle of analogy, to the Gentiles. Paul's application of this text to the Gentiles could be based on the language of 'those who did not seek me.' The wording of the quotation therefore brings us back to where this whole passage began: Gentiles, who were not pursuing righteousness, have attained a right relationship with God (9:30).

Through Moses, who represented the law and through Isaiah, who represented the prophets, Paul firmly established that Israel's rejection of her Messiah came as no surprise to God. It was predicted that, because of that rejection, God would be 'found by' Gentiles who had not 'sought' Him and would 'manifest' Himself to those Gentiles 'who did not ask for Him.'

The overwhelming majority of churches in the United States, particularly evangelical churches, have embraced a seeker strategy for church growth, but the Bible says that apart from regeneration, no person seeks after God. Those who seek the kingdom of God—the main business of the Christian life—do not start seeking until they have been converted. Many unbelievers are desperately trying to find the benefits that only Christ can give them, but all the while they are actually fleeing from Jesus.

d) Quotation of Isaiah 65:2 (10:21)

²¹*But of Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'*

Having applied Isaiah 65:1 in v. 20 to the Gentiles, Paul now applies Isaiah 65:2 to Israel, an application that matches the original meaning of the text. The passage stresses both God's constant offer of grace to His people and their suborn resistance to that grace. But which is uppermost? God's continuing gracious concern for Israel? Or Israel's disobedience? The

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question that this verse sparks in 11:1 might suggest that the latter is closer to the truth. But we should probably not choose between the two. Both the grace of God in revealing Himself and in reaching out to Israel and Israel's refusal to respond to that grace are important for Paul's argument.

Apeitheō ('disobedient') literally means to contradict, to speak against. Throughout her history, Israel had, for the most part, contradicted and opposed the truth of the God who had lovingly called her and graciously and patiently '(all the day long) stretched out [His] hands' to her. What monumental and tragic failure! Unbelieving Jews misunderstood and rejected God, Jesus Christ, and saving faith because of their self-righteousness, and they misunderstood the extent of salvation because of their proud prejudice. They therefore failed as God's witness nation.

Despite God's 'great patience' with Israel they have proved to be 'disobedient and perverse.' Consequently, God has revealed Himself to the Gentiles who had 'not sought' for Him thus making the people of Israel 'angry' (vv. 20-21). Paul is probably hinting at the anger of man Jews directed at him for his mission to the Gentiles and their encouraging response to his preaching of Christ.

3. Summary on Limited Atonement

The doctrine of limited atonement—definite or particular redemption—teaches that the atonement of Jesus was not designed by God to make salvation possible to all men. Looking at Paul's words—'Whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved' (v. 13)—it certainly seems that Paul is making a universal offer, and if so, how can we talk about the atonement being limited to certain people?

Unlike universalists we understand that the benefits of the atonement are limited to those who believe. The New Testament does not claim that Jesus automatically saves everybody in the world. The condition for salvation is clear. To receive the benefits of the cross people must put their trust in Christ. At very least we must say the atonement is limited to believers. Jesus did not die for all indiscriminately; He died for believers.

So, who are believers? Paul answers that question: believers are the elect. Believers who are numbered among the elect will surely be brought to faith. The issue of limited atonement ultimately goes back to God's purpose in the covenant of redemption, where the Father covenanted with the Son and the Holy Spirit to bring about God's plan of salvation. Did God propose to send His Son into the world to die on the cross because He hoped that people would take advantage of that? Did He not know from all eternity the names of everyone who would embrace Jesus and those who would not? Did He send His Son to die to make salvation possible, or did He send His Son to die to make salvation certain? The doctrine of limited atonement holds that God knew what He was doing from all eternity. He constructed a plan of salvation, and in perfect agreement the Son came into the world to die for those whom the Father had given Him, knowing that those whom the Father had given Him would come and that His atonement would not be an exercise in futility or a hypothetical possibility. The Son knew that there would be a people saved as a result of His sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit knew all those to whom He would apply that work of the Son for salvation.

Why all the talk about a universal offer? The Bible tells us that God loves everybody indiscriminately in terms of His love of beneficence, but the love He gives to the redeemed is His love of complacency, which is limited only to believers. The Bible says that God abhors the

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wicked, but we tell everybody indiscriminately that God loves them unconditionally. That is considered the universal offer of the gospel, but the universal offer of the gospel is really to proclaim to every living creature the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called, as the apostle tells us in this passage, to go to the four corners of the world to preach the gospel. In that sense, there is to be a universal proclamation of the gospel.

The church is in every nation. The voice of the gospel has gone to every corner of the planet, and there are people from every tongue and tribe and nation right now incorporated into the church of Jesus Christ. That is what we mean when we say the church is ‘catholic.’ It is not limited to one denomination or nation, be it Israel or America. The church is everywhere, because God has reserved for His Son people from every corner of the world.

To whom is the gospel offered? Is it offered to everyone indiscriminately, with no strings attached? No, the good news is offered only to those who believe. If you are not willing to put your faith in Christ, then the gospel is not offered to you. The gospel is proclaimed universally, but its benefits are offered only to believers, those who hear the Word and are brought to faith in and through the Word.

Have you heard God through His Word? When the Bible is expounded, does it tickle your ears or inflame your soul? Does the Spirit of God take this Word and bother you with it? Does he pierce, comfort, strengthen, and encourage you with it? There is nothing else. If every church member in America would ask that the Word of God be preached in an expository manner every Sunday, it would blow the lid off this country, because that is where the power is. It is not in our programs, buildings, or parking lots. It is in the Word.

For next time: Read Romans 11:1-10.