

Romans Part 2

How to be a Christian without Being Religious!

Lesson 2: The Necessity of Sharing the Gospel! (Romans 10:14-33)

Paul writes in Romans 10:12-13, “For there is no difference 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.’” The question is, “How can anyone call on the name of the Lord if he has never heard the gospel or simply never heard of Jesus?” He can’t. The gospel must be proclaimed. This is why Jesus came into the world—to proclaim the gospel. Mark 1:14-15 state, “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” The word *gospel* means “good news!” And what incredibly good news it is! It is only through the gospel message that people can be saved. In order for people all around the world to be saved, they must hear the gospel and be given a chance to respond by faith.

In the four gospels, we learn that Jesus called twelve men to come and follow Him so that He could reveal the gospel to them. Then, He sent them out, two by two, to share this good news with others. Furthermore, Jesus called others to receive this word of faith, and then, he sent them out to share this good news with others. In this way, the gospel began to spread. Luke 10:1-2 state, “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’” Later, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, many came to believe and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After Pentecost (Acts 2), the disciples were filled with power and began to go from place to place telling others this incredible, good news—the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the word began to go forth, and more and more people began to believe, a great persecution took place. Read the words of Acts 8:1-4: “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” The Lord used the persecution of His church, literally, to force His followers to obey His command to go out and share the good news with the world. It is imperative that the gospel is shared so that everyone on the planet is given a chance to respond. Moreover, the sharing of the gospel to the ends of the earth will usher in the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Matthew 24:14 states, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Now, look at Romans 10:14-15. Paul writes, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” It is important to note the order in which God has ordained that salvation comes to mankind:

1. Jesus **sends** out men and women as heralds!
2. These men and women **preach/share** the gospel!
3. The gospel is **heard**!
4. Some of the hearers of the gospel **respond by faith**!
5. Those who truly believe **call** on the Lord Jesus to save them!
6. Those who truly respond are **saved**!

John Stott writes,

The essence of Paul's argument is seen if we put six verbs in the opposite order: Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved. And the relentless logic of Paul's case for evangelism is felt most forcibly when the stages are stated negatively and each is seen to be essential to the next. Thus, unless some people are commissioned for the task, there will be no gospel preachers; unless the gospel is preached, sinners will not hear Christ's message and voice; unless they hear him, they will not believe the truths of his death and resurrection; unless they believe these truths, they will not call on him; and unless they call on his name, they will not be saved. Since Paul began this chapter by expressing his longing that the Israelites will be saved, he must surely have had them specially in mind when developing this evangelistic strategy in these verses.⁷

What exactly is the gospel message? Paul gives a very succinct answer to this question in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. He writes,

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Paul understood, perhaps more than anyone else, the importance of hearing the gospel. And he heard it in a very abnormal and unusual manner—directly from Jesus when he appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). As a result, his life was changed forever.

In the preceding Scripture passage, Paul wrote, “By this gospel you are saved.” Do you see the importance of hearing the gospel? The Lord issues an invitation to come to Him and be saved through the preaching of the gospel. And “how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:15). Those who are willing to share the good news with others are precious in God’s sight. Are you willing to share this good news with others?

Paul writes in Ephesians 1:13-14, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption

⁷ Stott, 286.

of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.” Paul understood that the gospel message is infused with supernatural power. In Romans 1:16-17 he writes, “I am not ashamed of the *gospel*, because *it* is the *power* of God for the *salvation* of everyone who *believes*: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the *gospel* a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by *faith*’” (emphasis mine). The gospel is powerful because it contains God's power. Thus, it is able to penetrate callous hearts and to save. It is able to do all this because the Spirit is in it. Therefore, we should not keep it to ourselves. We must be willing to open our mouths and share this incredible good news with those we encounter every day. After his conversion, Paul dedicated his life to the mission, and it cost him dearly. But, he was a good soldier for Jesus Christ. Are you?

Paul continues to reveal the problem with his own people, the Israelites. They heard the word of faith but, for some reason, they would not believe. In Romans 10, verses 16-18, Paul reflects, “But not all the Israelites have accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our message?’ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the world of Christ. But I ask: 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.’” The Jews were God's chosen people, and He gave them many significant blessings. Paul describes the “people of Israel” in Romans 9:4-5: “Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.” So why did they not believe? The answer: Their stubborn and hard hearts.

But before we Gentiles cast any stones, let us examine our own hearts. Those of us born in America have been the most privileged people in history when it comes to hearing the gospel. Our country was founded by true believers who established this country under God, and His Word was infused into our very culture. We have churches on every street corner. We have heard incredible men of God, such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, D.L. Moody and Billy Graham, preach for the past 200 years. We have more Bibles and Christian bookstores than any other nation on earth. So, why do so many Gentiles refuse to truly believe? The answer—stubborn and callous hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 observes, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

In Matthew 13:13-15, Jesus replied,

This is why I speak to them [the religious leaders] in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing they do not hear or understand.” In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”

Jews and Gentiles alike refuse to believe the gospel due to their hardened hearts. Understand that the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. And, because most of the Jews rejected the gospel, the Lord chose Paul to carry it to the Gentiles to make the Jews envious (verse 19). In Acts 9:15, Jesus says to Ananias concerning Paul, “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.”

Paul was chosen directly by Jesus to carry the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. He found much more fertile soil among the Gentiles. It is sad that religion tends to blind men and women to the truth of the gospel. This was the problem with the Jews; they were religious and lost just like many Gentiles today.

The prophet Isaiah foretold that many people would hear the gospel over and over again yet never truly believe. In Romans 10, verses 20-21, Paul quotes Isaiah: "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem because of their unbelief. He says in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." I believe Jesus continues to weep over Jerusalem as most of the Jews persist in their unbelief. Moreover, I believe Jesus weeps over America as the nation which was founded upon God's Word drifts further and further from her spiritual mooring!

God is finished neither with Israel nor America. The gospel is still proclaimed all over the world. Jews, Muslims, Hindus and churchgoers in America are hearing the good news. How about you? Have you heard the gospel over and over, yet you still refuse to truly believe in Jesus? Come to Him while there is still time. Don't be "disobedient and obstinate" while Jesus holds out His hands to you!

DAY 1

1. From the above commentary, what are two important truths that you learned?

2. Read pages 89-92 from *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*.
 - a. Ridenour writes, "Paul makes one thing clear in this passage: Religious zeal is not enough" (91). Explain:

b. Ridenour writes, “You don’t have to reach up to respond to God by trying to keep his laws (see Romans 10:4-7). You simply respond to God as He reaches down to you” (92).

1. Using John 1:12-13 explain what Ridenour means:

2. Explain what it really means to “believe” (trust) in Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

DAY 2 Read Romans 10:14-15

3. [Personal Question] Take each of the following actions and explain how you have witnessed these in your own personal salvation experience. Try to provide dates and names of people involved in your life. For example, if you first heard the gospel from a friend, try to remember the name of your friend and the time in your life when he or she shared the gospel with you.

A. Jesus **sends** out men and women as heralds!

B. These men and women **preach/share** the gospel!

C. The gospel is **heard**!

D. Some of the hearers of the gospel **respond by faith**!

E. Those who truly believe **call** on the Lord Jesus to save them!

F. Those who truly respond are **saved**!

Warning: If you have a difficult time remembering these events in your life, then perhaps they never occurred. Perhaps you are one of those people Jesus had in mind when He said, “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand” (Matthew 13:13). If so, what should you do right now? (John 1:12, 3:16, Romans 10:13)

DAY 3 Read John 9:1-41

4. The blind man who encountered Jesus in this chapter was born blind in two ways—physically and spiritually (see verse 25 and 2 Corinthians 4:40). Explain.

5. Read verses 35-38 again.
 - a. Jesus asked the blind man, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” Why did Jesus use this title for Himself? (See Daniel 7:13-14; Mark 8:31.) This title, “Son of Man,” is Jesus’ favorite title for Himself. It is a Messianic title! Therein lies the key to why He used this title with the blind man.

 - b. Using verses 30-33 and 38, give two actions, on the part of the blind man, that serve as evidence of his genuine faith in Jesus.

 - c. Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” Explain what Jesus meant (See John 9:40-41 and 1 Corinthians 2:14).

- d. What do you learn from the following passages?
1. Matthew 23:16
 2. John 9:40-41
 3. 1 Corinthians 2:14
 4. 2 Corinthians 4:4

DAYS 4 and 5 Read Romans 10:16-21

In these concluding verses, Paul shows that the Jews heard the gospel and understood it, but for some reason, they (most of the Jews) refused to believe. Let's see why they refused to believe.

6. In verse 16, Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah: "Lord, who has believed our message?" (Isaiah 53:1). Who did believe the gospel? Jews or Gentiles?

7. Verse 17 states, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Explain how this works (Romans 1:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14).

8. In verse 18, Paul asks, "Did they (the Jews) not hear?" Explain how the Jews heard more about the gospel than the Gentiles using the below-listed verses. [Put a lot of thought into this question. Consider all the ways the Israelites, as God's chosen people, were entrusted with the gospel and had every advantage.]
 - a. Romans 10:18
 - b. Romans 9:4-5
 - c. Matthew 3:1-6
 - d. Mark 1:14-15
 - e. Luke 4:14-21
 - f. Luke 11:29-32
 - g. Acts 7

Tim Keller writes:

But perhaps there is still room for excuses. Perhaps they did not hear the gospel (v. 18). Paul answers: "Of course they did" (v. 18). He quotes Psalm 19, which is a little surprising, for it speaks of how God's creation (the mountains, the heavens) declares the glory of God all over the world. Paul probably meant that the spread of the gospel was as widespread as that. Before anyone objects that the gospel even now has not reached every part of the world, realize that Paul is thinking of the Jews. Wherever a Jewish community existed, the gospel had been preached. They had heard.

But perhaps Israel did not understand (Romans 10:19)? By asking this question, Paul is showing that it is possible to be exposed to the gospel and not really understand it intellectually. But he answers that they did understand. He quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 to show that only the Gentiles had "no understanding." They did not know the nature of God (his holiness), the need for righteousness, the promises of forgiveness by substitution implicit in the tabernacle and temple worship, all the promises about a Messiah, or (especially) the fact that the Lord could become our righteousness for us (Jeremiah 23:5-6). Thus the Gentiles, not the Jews, did not understand the ways of God. Deuteronomy 32:21 shows that God in a sense shows the Jews up with the Gentiles, making the Jews "envious" of them.⁸

9. According to Romans 10:21, why did the Israelites reject the gospel?

10. [Personal Question] Have you heard the gospel message? Have you understood it? Have you received Jesus Christ into your heart by faith and placed your trust in Him to save you?

⁸ Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 for You* (Epsom, Surrey, England: The Good Book Company, 2015), 82-83.