

“Unless We are Sent” //

Romans 10:14–17 // Romans

#21

Romans 10, if you have your Bible, or **page 64** in your Romans journal.

Last week I told you that **Romans 10 is the flip of Romans 9**. Romans 9 was all about God’s sovereignty in the salvation process; Romans 10 focuses on our role.

For Paul, God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility exist together in a mysterious tension that we, at least on this side of eternity, may never fully resolve.

The 1st 13 verses of Romans 10 focused on how and what we believe. Starting in vs. 14 Paul shifts his focus to how we help others believe.

Today we’re going to get at the heart of Christian mission. The 4 verses we’re going to look at are the culmination of Paul’s relentlessly building logic--what all this means for how a serious follower of Jesus sees his or her life:

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news¹... ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Because there is only one way of salvation, he says--by grace through faith in the gospel message--and **because we, the church, have been entrusted with that gospel message**, we owe it to others to **give our lives in whatever way it takes** to get the gospel message to them.

No matter what else we’re called to in life, proclaiming that message to others is our primary responsibility.

This brings up, however, one of the **biggest sticking points people outside the church have with the Christian message**. Do Christians really think there’s only one way? Isn’t that condescending and something that no educated person with any global sense says any more?

I’ve heard this objection raised in gospel conversations I’ve had airplanes, college campuses, in my office, and even--in a Waffle House

- I’d **stopped one day at the Waffle House** to feast upon (what I refer to as) “the cuisine of the gods.” I had just ordered my hashbrowns (scattered....) when I overheard a conversation taking place in the booth next to me between this guy and his waitress.
- **I caught on that they were having a discussion about God**, and so my ears perked up. They went back and forth for a while and I heard the guy say, “You know, I think the most important question to settle is whether you are right with God.” I thought, “this sounds pretty good.” “But the problem,” he said, “is that there’s all these opinions out there about God. How are you supposed to know which one is right?”
- **Well, I’m sitting there, with my mouth full of hashbrowns, thinking, “Wow, you people are so in luck! Talk about a divine coincidence. I have my MASTER of Divinity. That makes me a certified expert on God. I have mastered the divine.”**

¹ Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15

- And I actually put my hand up, and was starting to speak, when the waitress jumped in and said, “Yeah, you’re right. But you know I hate? It’s them born-again types. When they come in here, and you start talking about God they just take over the conversation telling you why they are right and you are wrong. They don’t care about you; they just care about showing that they are right and shoving what they believe down your throat.” Then she sees my hand and says, “Honey, can I help you?” And I was like, “Yeah. Could I have some more tea? ”

The conversation actually turned out great--I was able to explain to her that Jesus wasn’t like that, and he really cared about people, so much so that he would tell him the truth. **It ended up being a great conversation.** But that’s how many people see Christians: gallivanting about, forcing their own religious preferences and perspectives on everyone else.

And they wonder how, in our globalized world, anyone can think like that anymore!

- **Saying your way is the only way does nothing but create division and violence**, they think.
- **We live in a world where any claim to absolute truth is seen as a quest for power**, because, as Foucault explained, if your way is the only right way, then it’s assumed you should be in charge.
- **Interestingly, btw, this perspective is not new**--historians say that in the Roman world into which Christianity was born, there were only **2 rules**: Believe whatever you want; just don’t say your God is the only God because then you, as his people, will feel like you should rule and you’ll challenge Caesar for rule.
- **On top of the Pantheon was a seal.** It said, “Caesar, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Caesar referred to himself as the Son of God.
 - The message was: **You could worship whatever god you wanted**, just don’t give your god the supreme place of rule.

- **Well, when the Apostles chose those same titles for Jesus**, they were challenging Caesar directly, and in response to the **Roman rules of religion**, they made statements like, “Surely there is salvation found in no other, for there is no other name...” and repeated what Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life...”, **even though that eventually cost them** their lives.

So, I want to review Paul’s logic in Romans 1–10, to show you how **proclaiming Jesus as the only way is an inescapable conclusion of gospel logic**, and then what that means for us.

So, let’s go back to the beginning:

Premise 1: God has been rejected by all (1:18–20)

¹⁸ **For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness** (godlessness means **wrong attitudes** toward God. A corruption in our vertical relationship) **and unrighteousness of people...** (unrighteousness is **corruption in our horizontal relationships**. Instead of being loving, humble, and truthful, We tend to be self-centered, proud and manipulating.²)

God’s wrath is against people like this, ...who (watch this) by their unrighteousness (because of the unrighteous bent of their hearts) **suppress the truth,**

- **Suppress: Suppression, we said, is not the same as ignorance.** Suppression means the truth is in there but you kept yourself from acknowledging it.
- It was **like a beach ball** you tried to hold under the water. The knowledge of God kept trying to come to the surface and you kept shoving it down.

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. TWO PLACES we pointed out that God has

² Tim Keller, Romans for You, 26

revealed himself to us--**in them** (in our hearts--through our longing for meaning and immortality--what you experience at the death of a child or a loved one; and through our sense of moral accountability). That was the first place. The second was **to them** (from what we observe in creation)

20 For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

I don't have time again to go into all the ways God reveals himself like I did in our message on Romans 1 (you can go back and listen to that message if you want) I just want to point out that Paul contends that all people, instinctively, know the truth about God. It's only a **corrupted, rebellious heart** that suppresses and distorts it.

You say, "**What about people who have never heard God's name?**" Paul says, "Even if they don't know his name, they know there is an all-powerful, ruling God."

- One of my favorite stories illustrating this comes from the life of. **Helen Keller:** *"As Dr. Brooks sat there, he talked to Miss Sullivan, and she translated the words to Helen Keller through the finger pressures that she used for communication. As she got across the idea about God, suddenly a light broke out on Miss Keller's face, and she answered back in her way, 'Oh, I know Him. I've known Him a long, long time. I just didn't know what to call him.'"*³
- Even in the heart of someone who has no eyes to see nor ears to hear – **God has written himself into the human heart.**

You say, "What about atheists? They genuinely believe there is no God." Paul would say, "They may have convinced themselves intellectually there is no God, but their hearts still know the truth."

I told you this story to illustrate that: Imagine a woman whose husband dies, leaving her with only their one son. She doesn't

have much of a career to speak of, and can barely make ends meet so, as a result, everything revolves around her son. She uses all her money to send him to the best school. One day the teacher tells her there's pretty good evidence that his son routinely cheats and steals from other kids. But, as parents often do, she works out a counter theory that explains the evidence, convincing herself that the people and teachers at this school have it out for them and pulls his son out of school. Well, **6 months later, the same situation happens** at the new school and every school thereafter.

See, in her heart, she knows the truth. But in her mind, she won't admit it to herself. Her son her whole life now, her savior, her job, and she just can't entertain that theory.

IOW, she knows, but she doesn't know, because she doesn't want to know.

Paul says **the same dynamic is happening between us and God**. Everybody in their heart knows the truth, but we **don't want to admit it** to ourselves so we have twisted our innate knowledge of God, reshaping him into a deity we can control and manage, or denied the truth about him altogether.

So,

Premise 2: God rightfully has condemned all (3:10–11)

Paul reasons: Our suppression of that truth deserves the wrath of God. **Right?**

If our hearts are so wicked that we suppress any knowledge of an all-powerful, ruling God, that surely would deserve his wrath. If you put

³ <http://www.raystedman.org/romans1/0006.html>

your fist in God's face and say, "No, God, I want to be God, you go to hell," **we deserve** God's wrath.

And Paul says, "That's exactly what the human race has done." We may have never uttered those words, but **how we live says that** to God.

Paul concludes: 10 As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. 11 There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.

That means (pay attention to this): We are all guilty, not because of what we haven't heard, but because of what we have heard and rejected.

- **Did you get that?** God doesn't condemn people for not hearing about Jesus or not being Christians. He condemns them for suppressing, distorting or rejecting the knowledge of God that we have. Which everyone has done.
- **IOW, the innocent native on a deserted island somewhere,** pure in heart and spirit, doesn't exist.
- **All have turned away;** all have become worthless. There is none who does good, none who seeks God, not even one.

Premise 3. God has made a way of salvation for all (3:21–24)

Romans 3:21–24 ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... (gift righteousness, not earned righteousness) ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe... ²⁴ (we) are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."

I pointed out **4 key words** in those verses:

- **Gift:** God's salvation is not something that comes from within us. It is something given to us. Alien righteousness--righteousness from outside us given to us.
- **Redemption:** To give us this gift Jesus had to pay our sin debt. Our **salvation was free for us**, but not for him.
 - We say: **Gospel in 4 words:** Jesus in my place. Having lived the life I was supposed to live, he died the death I was condemned to die.
- 3rd word: **Grace.** Grace means undeserved.
 - What was fair was that God condemn us. To offer us another chance at eternal life was an act of grace that we did not deserve.
- Final word: **Believe:** The way we receive the gift is simply to believe it. To claim it as our own.
 - **One of our kids' leaders:** "like a candybar"

Gift. Redemption. Grace. Believe. This brings us to Paul's 4th logical building block, found where we are in Romans 10:

Premise 4. God has commissioned us to carry the gospel to all (10:14–17)

Paul reasons: ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news⁴... ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

In order to receive the gift, Paul reasons, they have to hear about the gift; and in order to hear about the gift, those who know about the gift have to go tell them about it.

⁴ Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15

You say, “Well, what if someone never heard about Jesus but they responded to what they saw of God in creation or in their conscience--”God, I want to know you and surrender to you,’ or, they responded to the good parts of their religion--**isn’t that enough?”**

- Well, remember Paul’s conclusion in chapter 3: **In one sense, there are none who respond rightly, none who seek after God.**
- **Vs. 17** says the only way for faith to grow up in the heart (v. 17) is through what? *Hearing!* And hearing comes through the **preached Word of Christ.**
 - **The preached word of God has a strange, life giving power.** The Word of God not only tells you what to do, it gives you the power to do it.
 - **Like the words of Jesus “Rise up and walk.”** Not only did Jesus give a command, in those words were the power to obey command.
 - Here’s my analogy: **Standing on top of a building.** The **Word of God heals** your heart as you hear it.
 - What Paul says is that without the word of God, there can be no faith

You say, “Well, what if they respond positively to what they see of God in nature--wanting to know the God they see revealed there? **God wouldn’t condemn them for that, would he?”**

- Interestingly, the book of Acts tells you a story about a guy just like that, named Cornelius. **Acts 10:1–3: “There was a certain man... called Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!” And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?” So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Now send for ...Peter. He will tell you what you must do.”**

And he sends for Peter and Peter comes and explains to him the gospel. In **Acts 10:43** Peter concludes his sermon to Cornelius by

saying, **“To Jesus all the prophets give witness, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”**

(Not: “*Cornelius, God has noticed you’re a good guy and God has already accepted you because of how you responded. I’m here to announce to you that you’re already saved.*” No, he says you must **now believe in Jesus and then you will receive** the forgiveness of sins through his name.)

People can only be saved by faith, and faith only comes through the preached gospel, **and, throughout the NT, the gospel is only ever preached through a human mouth.**

- **Search Acts:** You won’t find an example of the gospel being shared apart through a human mouth or writing.
- **(Even the angel that God sent to Cornelius’ house** didn’t explain the gospel. He told him to send for Peter who would preach to him. I mean, wouldn’t it have been easier to have the angel go ahead and take care of it?)
- The gospel can only be proclaimed through a human mouth.

And, if there is someone out there whom God has enabled to respond in the right way to what they see, then Acts indicates that God surely will raise up someone to go to them.

Here’s how I think about this. **I once met a Cornelius: Ishmael.**

- *Do you ever think that maybe God is stirring up some of you at this moment precisely because he is working in someone like Ishmael over there?*

People can only be saved by hearing about Jesus, **and they can only hear** about him through the witness of a believer. **So, to the church,** Paul says, “*How will they call on him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear unless they are sent?”*

Which leads to...

Premise 5. The Task is Urgent (1:14)

- If all this is true--if **the book of Romans is true**--what does this mean for our lives?
- **Listen: At most, 1/3 of the people on earth claim to be Christians.** That means there are at least 4.5 billion people on the planet whom we know are not Christians.
 - **The Joshua Project**, a missions research company, estimates that about ½ of those have little or no access to the gospel.
 - If you **lined these people up 5 across**, they would circle the globe 5 times. Picture in your minds that many people just marching to destruction!
 - **Each one of those is someone just like you**, made in the image of God like you--who feels fear just like you, gets lonely...
 - **Don't turn that into a statistic: Stalin**
- **College students: You care about suffering, oppression.** You want to see human rights extended to all and oppression ended. You want to help provide clean water in Africa, promote education reform in the Sudan, and advocate for women's rights in the Middle East. You care about marginalized and suffering groups here in our own country.
- **That's great. But the worst kind of suffering is eternal suffering.** Isn't that what we should be thinking about most, without neglecting the other?

This brings us back to Romans 1. Paul says in light of all this, I see myself as "under obligation" to people around the world who have yet to hear. **He says: Romans 1:14 "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,[d] both to the wise and to the ignorant."**

- We talked about this in chapter 1, but let me review Paul's way of thinking because it is powerful.
- **The word he uses here means debtor.** But he'd never even met them? How can he feel under obligation to people he's never met?
- **We said: there's 2 ways to be in debt:** owe someone money; be given money for someone else.
 - **Say you worked for "Feed the Children"** and had been given a huge donation of \$1,000,000. What would people think of you if you decided that you'd just stash that money away for a while? That's not YOUR money, and you owe it to others to share it. It's the very reason it was given to you!
- That's what God tells us about the gospel message. You were no more worthy of it than anyone around the world. But God blessed you with it, and with the privilege of hearing the gospel comes the responsibility of spreading the gospel. And to not do that is stealing. Believing the gospel comes with an obligation to the gospel
- It was **this reality that God used when he called me**.
 - I was reading the book of Romans.
 - Deny it... this is what many Christians choose to do. They change the word of God to fit their preferences. Path to liberalism, why so popular.
 - Ignore it. Just don't think about it.. give lip service to believing but live as if it's not true.
 - Embrace it: Or, I knew I could give my life fully to it, which I chose to do. I could say, like Isaiah, "Here am I, Lord, send me."
 - **E.g. Railroad tracks**
 - I used to think it was **unfair for God to condemn those who hadn't heard**. Now I see from Romans that is not true. **What is NOT fair, however, is that those of us who have heard so**

much do so little to get the message to those who have heard nothing at all (about a God who has done everything.)

So, let me conclude with:

5 Practical Steps:

(1) Pray that people in our church will say “yes” to God

Are we not right, Summit, to pray for God to raise up people from our midst for this great task? Jesus commands us: “**The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest that he will send out laborers into his harvest.**” **Matthew 9:37–38**

We just need to start with prayer. Daily prayer that God will raise up messengers from our midst.

These will come in 3 varieties:

- **Those who leverage their careers.** (What I saw overseas--people pursuing their careers in big cities, part of a thriving community good for their families and seeing people come to Jesus.)
- **Some who leave their careers**--who walk away from it to focus entirely on the work. Some of the greatest world changers of the past were like this--Adoniram Judson, Hudson Taylor; today, people from our church like Craig Eggleton and Jesse Snodgrass.
- We also need **seminary students and church leaders** who will go over to help pastor some of these international churches to help be a hub for people we send--in places like London, KL and Mumbai. **So strategic.**

(2) Give to help others go

Listen, maybe God has not called you to live overseas. But maybe he’s given you the means to help send others. **Sending is a whole church process**, and those who help send should be every bit as committed to the work as those who go.

Listen, every year, **we at TSC give 17.3% of every dollar given here away** to missions (that’s almost 1 out of every 5 dollars!). That amounted to more than \$4.3 million last year. Your money, your tithe: it’s accomplishing something.

It’s why we push ourselves to give. It’s why we do things like “First,” where we challenge ourselves to make the Kingdom of God first in our finances.

Those who help send should be every bit as committed to the work as those who go. **William Carey** famously said: “I’ll dangle from the rope...”

- **This is why I agreed to serve as SBC President.** When my wife and I were considering it, knowing it would add a lot of trouble, and complexity, to my life, Veronica said it best: “**It feels insincere...**”
- **It’s why I took time to go overseas this summer**--because I want to see what our members are doing over there, participate with them, encourage them, support them, and come home better able to pray for them.
- It’s why **some of you should give radically--to the point that you give away so much you have to change your lifestyle**--so that others can go.

The urgency of this mission requires something of all of us, TSC, and those of us who stay ought to bear the burden every bit as much as those who go.

(3) Be “sent” to the people in your life

- You **may not know everywhere that God may send you**, but you can be sure that you are sent to the people in your life right now. That’s **why he put you where you did**.
 - Every once in a while I hear from a guy named George that lived across the hall from me in college during my senior year. He only lived there for about 2 weeks. He had gotten kicked out of his apartment and needed a place to stay.
 - We had several long talks about the gospel. Things were really getting to him, and he came in late one Thursday night and got me out of bed and said, “Hey, I was walking around downtown tonight thinking... saw this sign... I think God is trying to speak to me.” “I do, too!” He’s now a Christian counselor.
- **God has you where you are for a reason.** The people in your life can’t hear and believe unless you speak to them?
- **Isn’t that why you are there?** Listen, it’s not an accident. **There are no accidents in the KoG.**
- One of the most effective soul-winners I’ve ever known said that every evangelist believes 2 things:
 - Salvation belongs to God (God arranges, God convinces)
 - Faith comes by hearing (we have to speak to them)
- **This is your role. It’s why you are where you are. Don’t fail at your duty!**
 - When I was a **youth pastor there was a girl** that I had led to Christ who really wanted to see her sister come to faith. So, she had me come over and talk to her sister at their kitchen

table... “And you never told me? What if I died during that time?” It was kind of funny--but not in eternity, it won’t be.

(4) Go where you can now

- **We believe at TSC that *almost every member* should go on short term mission trips, and, if I don’t say so myself, we **make it ridiculously** easy for you to do so.**
- It’s a way you can familiarize yourself with and share the burden of our missionaries.
- We have **trips going out at all points of the year to places** far and near--**as close as needy areas right here in NC** and as far as Nepal and central Africa.
 - We have trips that are **good for families** and mothers with sons and fathers with daughters.
 - We have **options for those of you who travel well** and those who don’t.
- There are a **small handful of you are medically hindered**. The rest of you should saddle up.
- **My challenge to all of you: Tithe your year!** One week a year? **We talk about money**--how about your time?
- **My second challenge:** Start the investigation process for this today. As soon as we finish here, don't wait. Run, don 't walk, to the Next Steps area at every campus. You have a **campus mobilizer who oversees the missions for your campus standing there** at every service ready to help counsel you in this and get you started checking out possibilities.

(5) Cross a boundary

Paul knew that if this work is going to get done, a bunch of us were going to have to **intentionally cross geographic and cultural boundaries.**

Sure, it's **easiest to share with your roommate**, or your co-worker, or the people on your sports team, or those in your political party, but **a bunch of us have to be willing to cross boundaries to other neighborhoods and other parts of the city where we encounter people who are not exactly like us; and, to go to those who do not even speak our language 1000 miles away.**

Listen, the only reason you and I are here is because past generations of Christians did this faithfully for us in the past. [Jerusalem to RDU](#)

Challenge: Put your yes on the table and let God put it on the map

- Some of you **need to go not just on a short-term trip, but for the rest of your life.** (There's so much you can't accomplish in 2 years or 5 years or even 10 years. It takes the investment of your life.)

Invitation:

- Stand if My yes is on the table
- Now, I'm going to ask everyone to sit down, **UNLESS** you think God might be calling you to cross a boundary. Not just short term, but possibly longer. All campuses.