“Unless We are Sent” // Romans 10:14–17 // Romans #21

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

Before we get to that, I wanted to **make a very quick comment** about something you may have seen me post on social media yesterday. As you may know, For the last 15 months, I’ve been serving as the **President of the SBC**, and one of the main initiatives we have taken on is to **ensure that our churches are places of refuge for those who have experienced abuse**.

Well this weekend marks our nationwide launch of something we’ve put together called *The Caring Well Challenge* which **helps provide churches nationwide with a pathway to immediately enhance their efforts to prevent abuse and care for abuse survivor**s...

While this issue of abuse is unspeakably tragic, we’re excited to **join churches across the nation** in committing ourselves to take all possible steps to better confront this crisis. (If you want to know more about *The Caring Well Challenge* you can find a link on the homepage of our website.)

**OK, last week I explained to 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 we believe. Starting in vs. 14 Paul shifts his focus on the role we play in helping others believe.

**Listen, 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 gospel theology 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 beautifulare the feet of those who bring good news[[1]](#footnote-1)... (JORDANS) 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**Because there is only one way of salvation**, THAT IS, resting in faith in the finished work of Christ--and **because we, the church, are the only ones entrusted with that gospel message**, we owe it to those who have not heard to **give our lives** to get the gospel message to them.

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

* **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 who confess to not being Christians.
* **The Joshua Project,** a missions research company, estimates that about ½ of those have little or no access to the gospel. That means right now, no real chance to hear the gospel.
* They say, 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!
* **I want you, who sit under gospel privileges each weekend, to reflect: 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**

**Now, let me stop here,** because this is where some of you get hung up.

**It sounds unfair…** God is going to appear at your bedside.

You say, “**Surely if someone was as good as they knew how to be, God would not condemn them.”**

Well, remember what Paul says in Romans 1–3**?**

**Remember this? 18** For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people… (***godlessness***, we said, meant **wrong attitudes** toward God; a corruption in our vertical relationship. *Unrighteousness* mean **corruption in our horizontal relationship**s. Instead of being loving, humble, and truthful, we are self-centered, proud and manipulating.[[2]](#footnote-2))

**The human race lives in a corrupted posture toward both God and fellow men**, and *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.

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 revealed himself to us--***in them*** (**that is, in our hearts-**-through things like our longing for meaning and immortality \*(what you feel when…); through our sense of moral accountability).

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.

Paul says that all of us resisted in one of 3 ways: a) rejecting his authority in our lives; b) reshaping him into a deity we can control and manage, or c) denying the truth about him altogether.

**Here’s Paul’s conclusion:** 3:10 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 and 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.
* AUCA INDIAN
* **All have turned away;** all have become worthless. There is none who does good, none who seeks God, *not. even. one*.

None of us, apart from the special work of God, responds in the right way.

**Look at v. 17**: vv. 14–17 says the only way for faith to grow up in the heart is through what? *Hearing!* And hearing comes through the **preached Word of Christ**.

* **You see, 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.
* Without the preached word of God, there can be no faith

**You say, “Well, what if someone responded positively to what they saw of God in nature--wanting to know the God they see revealed there?”**

* Interestingly, the book of Acts tells you just such a story like that: ***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.”*

So, Peter comes and explains to him the gospel. **And here’s what is important**: 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.)

**What we take away from that** is that it is necessary to hear the message of the gospel and believe it to get forgiveness, **but if there is someone out there whom God has enabled to respond in the right way** to what they know**,** Acts indicates that God raises up one of his people to get to them.

**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 instrument

**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?*
* *God is working in both Corneliuses and Peters…*

**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?”*

Paul is echoing what he said in the first chapter: **Romans 1:14** “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the ignorant.”

* **We went over this in chapter** 1, but it’s behind Paul’s thinking in Romans 10:
* **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.

Every year, **17.3% of all the money we receive is for sending** (that’s almost 1 out of every 5 dollars!). That amounted to more than $4.3 million last year. I tell you that to say that your money here goes not only to reaching the Triangle and raising up gospel witnesses but actually getting them out.

* **We’ve sent out 1200 people**.

**Maybe you are not one, but here’s what we believe: SENDING is a whole church process, and** those who help send should be **every bit as committed** to the work as those who go.

* **One of the groups our teams works with in SE Asia,** which my family joined up with **this summer, was a** single lady who runs what she calls “the House of Peace.” She’s adopted 20 orphan kids who were destined to end up on the street. (**Only reason she stopped at 20**…) My family got to lead in the devotions. *We have to feel the burden with her, right?*
* **My family also got to visit this school started by our teams for refugees** a few years ago and participate in a health clinic there. (BTW, this school is so successful at what they do that Obama came to visit it several years ago.) We saw 500 kids in and out. **We should feel the burden…**

Maybe God hasn’t called you to be there, but he’s called us to be a part of the process.

* **William Carey** famously said: “I’ll dangle from the rope…”
* Giving **radically--to the point that you give away so much you have to change your lifestyle--**is how you do that.

PIPER: GO, SEND, DISOBEY

**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.** **There are no accidents in the KoG.** The people in your life can’t hear and believe unless you speak to them.
* **Don’t fail the people in your life:**
* 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) Start short-term

* **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.

***\*\* Halfway through Jerusalem to RDU start music***

**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 your 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..

1. Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Tim Keller, Romans for You, 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)