



Do we really understand the desperate needs that exist around us?

Late one afternoon staff at Faith Children's Village brought a lone visitor to see out Administrator. The young visitor was a little girl, 11 years old. She had walked all day, crossing the Kafue River to find this place where she heard that people cared for kids. Both of her parents had died when she was a baby. She was cared for by her grandmother who later died. She was then in and out of various homes, some places she was mistreated and she was not in school. Finally she ran away. She would dance at bars for money. Someone told her about Faith Children's Village so on this day she came searching and pleading to be taken in.

Few of us here have faced a situation like this in our lives! Desperation, pain, suffering, a loss of hope for the future.

We have been studying the church and today we will look at the mission of the church. God has called us for a purpose – to glorify Him! But what are we to do?

Why does the church exist, why do we come together in fellowship, to study the Word, encourage and edify one another? What is it that all of this enables us to do that will bring God glory throughout eternity?

Let us look at our text in Romans 10. Have you ever encountered something that so deeply affected you that you felt deep searing anguish and grief in your heart? That is exactly what is happening with Paul in our text today!

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

He is so consumed with grief in His heart that he said this:

Romans 9:1 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,

What are the things that cause your heart to bleed? What are the things that causes you to cry out to God in heartfelt desperation?

Kent Hughes in his commentary on Romans is spot on when he wrote, “*Romans 9 teaches divine election—chapter 10 teaches human responsibility. I emphasize this because it is possible to get just enough of the vertical theology of chapter 9 to make us horizontally irresponsible... We humans like being absolved of responsibility.*”

Let's be very clear: “*If you are without Christ it is not because you are not elect – it is because you are rejecting Christ!*” (21)

Our mission is to carry out God's mission of reconciling sinful human beings to God through Christ! So what is the world's greatest need, and what must you do about it?

THE GOSPEL IS THE GREATEST NEED OF EVERY PEOPLE GROUP (1-13)

In the midst of human suffering, loss and the man ills that afflict modern-day man, why is the gospel the greatest need?

Because they are lost! (1)

Paul had a God-given passionate desire for the salvation of his own people group, the Jews. (10:1, 9:1-3). They did not realize it, they were convinced otherwise – but they were hopelessly lost!

Isaiah put it this way: All we like sheep have gone astray... and Paul wrote earlier in this same letter that “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.”

Because all people outside of Christ are trying and failing to establish their own righteousness. (2-3)

It is not enough that these people were sincere or zealous for God or committed to their religion. (2)

You can be zealous for church, zealous in Bible study, zealous in the choir, and be lost!

A couple years ago I was in the USA for some speaking engagements. On my trip home, I flew out of Boston on a Boeing 747 for Lusaka via London. After we got up to 40,000 feet the stewardesses serviced the cabin and eventually dimmed the lights for the night flight. I got up and went to the back of the plane. In front of the toilet doors near the exit door a man had rolled out his prayer mat and was on his knees bowing in prayer toward Mecca. There is no one who can question this man's zeal toward his religion!

And this is exactly what Paul was talking about – these people were zealously working for God in an attempt to establish their own righteousness. They were trying to be righteous by keeping the law.

Galatians 3: 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

God's standard is His own righteous perfections, and nobody can pull that off, no matter how sincere they are or how hard they try! The problem is human wickedness and depravity. Everyone, everywhere has sinned and stands guilty before God.

Some people base their confidence of salvation on how good they are in relation to someone else. Or they base their salvation on what they don't do. This is called moralism. You can be moral, but man's morality will never meet God's standard of righteous perfection!

Because there is no other way to be reconciled to God – none! (4-13)

Salvation through Christ is the ONLY way to God. Faith in Christ's finished work on the cross is the only way any person – Jew, Gentile, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu – can be saved. Jesus Christ is the only way to God! (4-8). You have to believe that!

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Now at this point, you might be asking a very fair question: How can Paul say this? If Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven, what about those who have never heard of Jesus?

Remember our text is coming from chapter 10, so we are jumping into something that Paul has already been talking about for some time. In fact he has already dealt with the answer to this very question. Let’s quickly look at what he has said,

God speaks through creation.

God is a God who loves and calls to all mankind, now matter where they are.

First, God speaks through Creation. Imagine that our hall this morning is in complete darkness, and I were to light a candle on the table at the front. Would you be able to see that flame? Of course! It would be the one thing in the midst of darkness that jumps out and screams for your attention. Now what if you rushed toward the light, not to embrace it, but to blow it out? God has given all men the light of creation, reject that light and you have no excuse. Here is how Paul explains it:

Romans 1:18 But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. 19 They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. 20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. (NLT)*

God speaks through Conscience

Our conscience is that inner voice in every one of us that tells us to do or not to do a thing. It is true that our conscience can be corrupt or misinformed, but that voice is there speaking to us none-the-less! It is interesting that anthropologists who reach formerly unreached peoples have yet to discover a society in some remote corner of the earth that is atheist! Why? Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that God “has put eternity in their hearts.”

Ro.2:14 Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. 15 They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. (NLT)

God speaks through Christ

Acts 17:22 So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows:*

“Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, 23 for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about. 24 “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, 25 and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. 26 From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. 27 “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. 28 For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your* own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ 29 And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. 30 “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. 31 For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”*

Salvation requires belief in two things (9-11):

- That Jesus is Lord – that he shares the nature, character, holiness, power and authority of the one and only true God and thus He is supreme over me – I belong to Him!
- That God raised Jesus from the dead – true belief of this will cause us to confess before others – “*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*” (Luke 6:45)

The salvation message is for EVERYONE! It is universal (13)

For whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. There is no national distinction, no ethnic distinction, cultural distinction, no depraved condition too

deep, no sin too great, no person too lost. The same Lord is over all people and is generous to all who call upon Him!

And here is the glorious crescendo to the gospel! Whoever will call upon Jesus will be delivered from the just condemnation of their rebellion and sin!

So how can verse 13 happen in Kitwe this week? How can this happen in Blantyre? In Nairobi? In Juba? In Accra? In Mogadishu?

If this is the world's greatest need – what must we do to meet it?

How does this gospel get to those who must receive it? How does it get to little orphaned girls that no one wants? Little girls like the 11 year old girl who arrived at Faith Children's Village?

Should maybe we fly over and drop illustrated leaflets explaining the gospel message? Maybe we could send food to the nearly 1m people on the verge of starvation of S. Kordafan & Blue Nile State, living in caves to escape the bombing raids from Kartoum? Maybe we should go to rural Zambia and dig some wells so people can have fresh water?

In Jesus' ministry He went everywhere "doing good." But there were always more sick people to heal, more dead people to raise up, more mouths to feed... and they were begging him to do these things. Mark 1:36–38 *And Simon... said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."*

PREACHING THE GOSPEL IS THE CHRISTIAN'S GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY (14-17)

Why is proclaiming the gospel the Christian's greatest responsibility?

Because we were commissioned to this task by Jesus Himself!

Paul was cornered by Jesus on the Damascus Road and called as a gospel witness (Acts 9). We too have been cornered by Jesus and called to be gospel witnesses for Jesus! (Mt.28.18-20)

Because whoever calls upon the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved! (13)

Because those who don't hear will be damned forever! (14-17)

Let us look at verses 14-15 in reverse:

- If here is no sending, there is no preaching. (15)
- If there is no preaching, there is no hearing. (14c)
- If there is no hearing, there is no believing. (14b)
- If there is no believing there is no calling. (14a)
- If there is no calling on Jesus – they are DAMNED! Forever!

John 3:18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Luke 16:23–24 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’

2 Thessalonians 1:8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 20:13–15 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Let's conclude with Paul's summary statement in verse 17: So then, Faith comes through hearing the Word of God! They must hear the word of God in order to believe! We too must hear the Word of God if we are to believe and obey!

The Gospel:

You must know it!

You must receive it!

Have you received God's free gift of salvation through Christ Jesus? Do you believe Christ is man's only way to heaven?

You must share it (17)

- Locally – intentional engagement and proclamation of the gospel within your circle of influence.
- Globally – through gospel partnerships. For some through obedient abandonment to going cross-culturally to preach this gospel.

You have just heard the gospel – have you received it? Is this truth your personal reality?

What is the all-consuming desire of *your* heart? Does your heart burn for people to know Christ?