

The Missionary's Responsibility

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Romans 10:1-17

Good morning. I am grateful on this occasion to share God's Word with you. Pastor Larry and the rest of the preaching team has been working together on a weekly basis to prepare the messages for our church. And, I am grateful to be part of that team, and join in the privilege of preaching God's Word. Today's messages will focus on Romans 10. If you have your Bible, you can turn there now to Romans 10.

This week has been an anxious time for our country, has it not? The election has caused many side effects. Some are relieved because they believe it's over. Others are angry. Others are nervous about what the future holds.

I spoke with a few people on Wednesday, and many, including myself, had a certain degree of election fatigue. So, I want to remind us all today, including myself, that Jesus is Lord. We put our trust in him for our future, not the government.

But, during these election seasons, I am reminded of the blessing that it is to live in America. We enjoy freedom in our country in ways that other people in the world do not believe possible. Now, it is deeply concerning that some of those freedoms are eroding, but nonetheless, we enjoy tremendous blessings on a daily basis.

Now, when it comes to blessings, if I were to count them, the list would be long. I am blessed to have a wonderful family. I am blessed with great friends. I have a wonderful job. I am blessed that I get to share in ministry with you all. I am blessed to be in good health. Think about the ways in which you are blessed, and I believe your list would be long too.

Isn't it true though, that blessings are often accompanied by responsibility. Let's say you are blessed to get a job promotion. You have more pay, but now you have more responsibility. Kids, you are blessed to go to school, but you have the responsibility to make good grades. When we are blessed with good friends, we have a responsibility to continue to nurture those relationships.

But the most remarkable blessing that we have in this life as Christians is our relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is to have a relationship with the Creator of the universe...to know him and to be known by him...to be loved by him...to have his light shining in us. And because of that blessing, we have a responsibility. Let me show you in Scripture. John 8:12, says,

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

There is the blessing. Jesus is the light of the world. As a Christian you have been given the blessing of his light of life. But, with this blessing from Jesus, comes responsibility. In Matthew 5, he says,

Matt. 5:14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus, as the light of the world, has given you the blessing of his light in your life, but with that blessing then comes the responsibility to let that light shine before others. Blessings yield responsibility. In the case of salvation, you are saved (blessing), so now you serve (responsibility). You are different (blessing), so you make a difference for the glory of God (responsibility).

We are continuing our series called the Missionary. We are all missionaries sharing this co-mission with God to impact the world for his kingdom sake. As such, Pastor Larry preached about the Missionary's lifestyle and actions as a witness to the world. Then, he preached about the reasons why we will, at times, endure suffering and be called to make sacrifices on mission for God.

Zach preached last week about Jesus, the missionary's hero. Today, we are going to look at the missionary's responsibility. As we will see our text, God has a plan to reach the world, and he has given you specific responsibilities as part of his plan. So, God's Word will answer this question:

What is the missionary's responsibility in God's plan to reach the world?

To answer that question, let's begin by reading Romans 10:1-7

Rom. 10:1 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. 2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

3 Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

5 Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.”

6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

So, what is the missionary’s responsibility in God’s plan to reach the world? We see here that we must care.

1. Care (1-7)

We must join with God in his care for the lost. The Apostle Paul is writing to a mainly Gentile audience in the church in Rome. Paul had a deep care for the souls of the Gentiles (everyone that is not a Jew). Later on at the end of this letter, he writes,

Rom. 14:16 He [God] gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

One of his main responsibilities for God, came from a burden that God put on his heart for the Gentiles. He labored hard so they would know that the Good News of Christ Jesus was for them as well. But in our text today, we see from the beginning, his deep concern for his own people, the Jews.

Brothers and sisters, he says to the Gentile converts in Rome, my heart’s **desire** and **prayer** to God is that the Israelites may be saved. His care for Israel was deep. Perhaps you cannot get a sense of how deep from this word desire, but let me show you how deep it was. Just one chapter prior to this in chapter nine, Paul writes,

Romans 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.

Do you see now how deeply he cared for the lost of Israel, his own people? Many times I have heard the parents of a sick child say, “I wish I could take this from them. I wish I could take their suffering upon myself so they could be well.” ‘

Paul is saying, “if I could, I would take their curse for them. If I could, I would take the wrath of God for their sin upon myself for their sake.” It was his deep desire and his prayer to God for them to be saved.

So, this begs the question for you: “Do you desire and pray for your people to be saved?” Because you have experienced the joy that comes from knowing God, and the freedom that comes from his salvation, do you have a deep burden for others to experience it too?

Let's look again at the Israelites condition as Paul describes in these verses, and see if you can think of people in your own circles who have a similar condition. In verse 3, he says they are zealous, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. In verse 3, He says they seek to establish their own righteousness as the way to being right with God.

Do you know people like that? Zealous, passionate about many things in their life, but when it comes to that which is most important, their soul, they are without knowledge of the truth?

Do you know those who are passionate about doing good for others? How about those people that would give you the shirts off their back if you were in need. They are good people, but are lacking the knowledge that no amount of good deeds are good enough to save their souls.

You see, the Israelites had placed all of their faith in their ability to follow the law as the means for their salvation and they had missed or rejected the fact that Jesus is the culmination of the law. So, Paul is pointing them away from the law and toward Christ as the means for righteousness, and not only for the Jew but the Gentile as well.

Paul uses verses 5 to 7 to explain this to them. In verse 5, he uses a quote from Moses in the Old Testament. Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them.

What he is saying is that righteousness that comes from the law is only obtained in man's ability to live by the law. We know that it is impossible to live by the law perfectly. That is why God made it possible for them to be forgiven of their unrighteousness through sacrifices.

But verses 6 and 7, he says that righteousness of faith does not say the same thing as the law. The righteousness of faith does not say, "Who will ascend to heaven to bring Christ down?" and "Who will descend into the deep to bring Christ up from the dead." The righteousness of faith does not say that.

They were lost because they believed the way to be righteous can be found by climbing. They believed that by climbing up, and climbing up, and climbing the ladder of following the law, trying to be better, and better, and better, and by getting high enough, eventually they would reach enlightenment unto salvation.

They were lost because they believed the way to be righteous is to go to the deep. To dig down. They believed if they could dig down deep enough, and dig, and dig, and learn enough, and study enough, that they would eventually find that which would save them from death.

But the reality is you can't climb high enough to achieve salvation. You don't have to reach up for that whom God has already sent down in Christ Jesus. And, you can't dig down deep enough to find that which will save you from death. It's already been done. God already raised Jesus from the dead to conquer death for you.

In other letters, Paul has said to look no further than him to find someone who has lived this way.

Phil. 3:4 If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Paul has a strong desire and prayer for his people to stop having zeal without knowledge because he once was the best of the best when it comes to following the law. Isn't that what spurs us on to have a burden for the lost in our lives? The fact we know what it is like because we once were lost. We once were darkness, but now we have the light of Christ.

We once were climbing, we once were digging to find our way to God. And some would agree with Paul and say, I was the chief of sinners. So, how many do you know that are climbing? How many do you know that are digging? Do you care for them? Are you burdened for them? Is your desire and prayer for them to know that the righteousness that is by faith is not obtained that way.

2. Preach (8-13)

Our responsibility in God's plan to reach the world is to care for the lost. Our second responsibility is to preach. We are to preach the good news, the message of faith. Continuing in Romans 10:8:

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim:

9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Paul is saying to these Roman converts that the Israelites have sought a false gospel that has obedience to the law as the end goal for salvation instead of the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ. So, he now reminds them of the true gospel concerning righteousness by faith. And notice, in verse 8 where he says “that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim.

What Paul is saying is that you have people in the world living under false truths, false worldviews, but we who have the truth of the gospel, have the responsibility of proclaiming that gospel.

At Northshore, we have taught relational evangelism as an effective way to reach people in our culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Relational evangelism, also called friendship evangelism, is the kind in which you build relationships with lost people, letting the light of Christ shine through your life to them, all the while looking for opportunities to share the Gospel.

Francis of Assisi had this to say about this kind of evangelism.

“It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching.”

Now, at some point his thoughts on this transformed into a quote that is not exactly what he said but it has been attributed to him anyway:

“Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.”

I have actually used this quote in one of my previous sermons to show that if you are living a life that doesn’t match what you preach, then it may end up being a hindrance to someone hearing the gospel that they see being lived in front of them, much less the gospel that you would speak to them.

But if taken alone, and without any context, this quote does not line up with Scripture, especially the one we have read today. To be in line with what Scripture actually says, the quote should read,

“Preach the Gospel at all times, and BECAUSE it is necessary, use words.”

It is absolutely essential, and we will see this even more later on in our text that words are necessary. In telling others about Christ, an effective witness must include more than being a good example. One pastor says it this way,

“Friendship evangelism is neither friendly nor evangelistic if the Gospel is never preached.”

Eventually, we will have to explain the content, the *what* and the *how* of the gospel. If not, then people will only attribute right living to us, instead of us connecting their hearts and minds to the gospel. So, what is it that we should preach?

First, we preach the nearness of the gospel. Paul uses another OT scripture in verse 9: “the word is near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart.” What does that mean though? Well, have you ever looked for something only to realize it was near the whole time. How many of you have looked all over for your glasses only to realize they were on your head? I have actually searched for my phone while I was on the phone.

The message that we preach to the world is that you don’t have to go far to obtain salvation. It’s right there, in your mouth, and in your heart. It is as near as you professing with your mouth, and believing in your heart.

Secondly, we preach the contents and the reception of the gospel. It says, declare with your mouth “Jesus is Lord” and Believe in Your heart God raised him from the dead you will be saved. These are the contents: Who Jesus is, and what he has done. Who is Jesus? 1 Cor. 8:5-6:

1 Cor. 8:5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”),

6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is Lord! And you must declare, profess (agree with God), that Jesus is Lord. There is no other Lord I am following. He is Lord! And we also believe what he has done? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15

1 Cor. 15:1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

Here, in our passage, Paul says that if we believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead we will be saved. Is that not the capstone of his saving work? Belief that Jesus rose from

the dead is the validating factor for his divinity, his perfect life, his death on the cross for sins. The resurrection is the proof that all of it is true. If there is no resurrection, there is no Christianity. So, believe that in your heart.

But, what does it mean to believe? John Paton, a missionary to the people of the New Hebrides, labored for years to develop a vocabulary for their spoken language so that he might begin translating the Bible for them.

But he found himself in a jam, as Bible translators often do, by a limitation he found in the native language. The islanders had no word that communicated the idea of trust or belief. And you can not communicate the gospel if you fail to articulate that word.

He struggled over this challenge until one day, two islanders came back from a long, hot day of hunting, carrying a large deer they had hunted. The two men struggled under the weight of the burden until they reached their destination, at which point they fell down in exhaustion on a chair. One Islander said, "it feels good to _____ on this chair." It wasn't the word sit, but a different word.

In hearing this, Paton asked what word they used to articulate what they had just done. They told him the word which meant that they committed themselves completely to that chair. They cast themselves totally onto the chair. When his translation was complete, he used that word meaning "cast yourself on", or commit yourself to" for "belief" and "trust."

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever "casts himself completely" on him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16). Lord, I believe that you died on the cross for my sins, I believe that you were buried, and that rose again from the dead.

There is no other means for salvation. I believe in my heart, cast myself fully on that truth for my salvation. I declare, I profess you are Lord. There is no other Lord but you! That is the contents of the gospel. That is how one receives the gospel

Lastly, we preach the availability of the Gospel. Verses 11-13 says, anyone and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. His salvation is for both.

His salvation is for the teenager, the mother, the father, the elderly, every race, every tribe and tongue, for the simple, for the wise, for the most self-righteous, to the vilest sinner. Anyone and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord--believing in what Jesus has done, and agreeing with God that he is Lord...will be saved. 2 Cor. 5:17 says,

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God's plan to reach the world includes responsibility for us. We should care and have a deep burden and pray for the lost. As God's mouthpiece, we are to preach: to proclaim the nearness of God and the richness of salvation that comes to those who believe in their heart that Jesus rose from the dead and profess, agree with God, that Jesus is Lord. And lastly, our responsibility is to Live Sent.

3. Live Sent (14-17)

14 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?

15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

From these verses, we can summarize, in reverse order, God's plan for taking the good news of the gospel to those in need. We see a chain of six links.

Send→Preach→Hear→Believe→Call→Saved

Do you see how God has given us responsibility in the first two. The last four links in the chain don't happen without the first two. God in his sovereign plan has designed it this way--for saved humanity to go and preach the gospel message to lost humanity.

But, I don't want you to miss this. The word sent is passive. It is not an action that we do--it is an action that God takes and is accomplished through us. God is the one who does the sending. Our only part in the first link is to respond to his sending. That is why I say live sent. We open our very lives to his great purpose for us...to know him and make him known to the world.

To whom will we preach the gospel message if we are not receptive to God's sending and responsive to it by going. Verse 17 says faith comes through hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. How can they hear without someone preaching?

Without preaching, the gospel message will not be heard. But even before that, if no one is living their lives as sent ones, then there will be no preaching to be heard.

In Scripture we see this chain working to fruition to bring about salvation. Remember Phillip in Acts 8, a believer who was one of the scattered because of Saul's persecution of the church. Philip was living sent, going where God led.

So, God sent him to the Ethiopian eunuch that had traveled by chariot some 800 miles to worship in Jerusalem. On his way back he is in a chariot trying to understand the Word of God. So, God sends Philip to preach the gospel of Christ to the eunuch, a man who had never heard the name of Jesus. The man was saved that day and baptized.

What about Cornelius? Who does God send to him? Peter. Peter was living sent. The Lord told him where he needed to go to meet with this man. So he went and preached the gospel to Cornelius and an entire group of people in his house. They were all saved that day and baptized.

Or the one writing our letter...the Apostle Paul? The man who once persecuted Christians had his transformative encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, and then committed the rest of his life, living sent by God.

Verse 16 said that not everyone accepted the news of Jesus that he preached. But Paul didn't stop living sent. And that should be an encouragement to you today. God does the sending, God does the saving. We can only do our part in going and preaching, and those who hear are the ones responsible to God, not to us, to believe the message.

In one of his sermons, the late Adrian Rogers, former pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, retells a preacher's story that he heard when he was a young man. The preacher, giving his own testimony, said that before his conversion, he was doing things that he ought not to do. His eyes were watching things, his hands were handling things, and his feet were going places that were all wrong.

So, he went to the doctor to see if he could get some help. The doctor he went to was named Dr. Law. And he told Dr. Law about his issues. "Doctor, I have a hand problem. My hands are handling things they ought not to handle." The doctor said, "well let me take a look. No, you don't have a hand problem, you actually have a heart problem."

"How can that be though, it's my hands." "No," the doctor said, "You, trust me it is your heart." The man said, "well I also have an eye problem. I look at things I ought not to look at." The doctor looked at his eyes, and said, "No, you don't have an eye problem, you have a heart problem."

"Well then take a look at my feet. I go places I shouldn't go." The doctor took a look, and said, "no you don't have a foot problem, the problem is your heart." The man said, "you mean to tell me that my hands, eyes, and feet aren't my problem? It's all related to my heart." "Yes," said Dr. Law. "You have a heart problem and it is fatal. You are going to die"

“Well, Dr. Law, can you cure me?” “Oh no, all I do is diagnose the problem. I can’t cure anyone.” “So are you saying there is no hope for me.” “No, I didn’t say that. I know of someone who can cure you.” “Please tell me who can help me.”

“Well, Dr. Grace is the only one who can cure heart problems like yours.” “Really, where is he located?” “He is right across the hall.” “Do you think he is available to see me?” “Oh, he is always available. His door is always open. Just knock.” “Well, does he charge a lot of money?” “Oh no, he won’t charge you a thing.”

So, the man left the office and went across the hall to Dr. Grace. He knocked on the door. And, Dr. Grace the kind physician opened the door. “Can I help you?” “Yes, I have a heart problem.” “Oh, how do you know this,” said Dr. Grace. “Dr. Law told me so.” “He told me I needed to come see you.” “Can you help me?” “Oh yes, I can help.”

The man said, “Do I need some medicine or something?” “No, I’m going to give you a heart transplant.” “What?!” “I am going to give you a transplant, a new heart!” “Will, it cost me anything?” “No, it won’t cost you anything. Is this what you want?” “Yes, please!”

So, Dr. Grace opened the man’s chest while he was still conscious, and pulled out the most vile, nasty heart. “The man couldn’t believe that he had such a horrible heart that his caused hands to handle things they shouldn’t handle, his eyes to look at things they shouldn’t look at, and his feet to take him places he ought not go.”

And, then Dr. Grace put in a new heart, and it changed everything about the man. This new heart gave him a new nature. This new heart affected everything and he could instantly feel the change through his eyes, his hands, and his feet.

In this story, Dr. Law is the law of God that points us to the fact that we need a righteousness that can only come through faith. And that’s where Dr. Grace comes in. He is Jesus Christ, our Lord who offers salvation to all who call upon his name, to all who come to his office for healing will the heart transplant that will save him.

If you knew of a doctor who had the cure for cancer, would you not tell everyone you know about him, what he has accomplished, and what he can do. You would make it your life mission to seek out everyone affected to tell them of the one who has the cure.

Well, folks, everyone in this world has the sin disease that destroys lives eternally and casts a dark shadow on life presently. And, we know the Great Physician, who has the cure for a sin filled heart. Why would we not proclaim the Good News of him to the world? We should make it our life’s mission to “live sent” and go into our world and to the world with the Good News of Jesus.

How will you respond today? Will you care? Will you preach? Will you live sent? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Good News.