

Romans 10:4-15

Paul had been called by the Lord Jesus to be his Apostle to the Gentiles. He therefore felt especially obligated to take the gospel to Rome for two reasons. Firstly Rome was the centre of the Gentile world so he wanted to visit Rome so he could preach the gospel there and see people believing in Christ and so fulfil his mission. Secondly since Rome was the centre of the Gentile world he wanted to launch further gospel work from Rome to other parts of the Gentile world, especially Spain, so it could lead to further fulfilment of his mission. With these matters in the back of his mind he reaches a point in his letter where he directly addresses gospel preaching and its preacher.

People of every nation, Jew or Gentile, basically had two choices about how to live. They could choose either to live by keeping the Law and so have their own righteousness to declare before God on judgement day or they could choose to live by faith in Christ and present his righteousness before God as covering them. These are the alternatives the apostle sets before us all.

Paul was passionate about people making the right choice. He knew from personal experience the folly of choosing to keep the Law as a way of achieving a righteousness before God. He had lived that way for the first thirty years of his life with great zeal. He had been circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law, had been born of good Jewish pedigree of the tribe of Benjamin, had been schooled in the strict Pharisee party, had zealously safeguarded the Jewish faith by persecuting any threat to it and had himself kept the Law with great diligence. If anyone could have achieved an acceptable righteousness before God, he could have. He, however, knew it was impossible for anyone to win God's approval that way. In fact in this very letter he had argued that the Gentile or Jew or the

Romans 10:4-15

moralist of any background, all fell short of the perfect standards required by God. Moreover the whole era of people saving themselves by doing the works of the Law had been brought to an end by the coming of Christ Jesus.

Paul asserted that the right choice was to choose faith in Christ and his righteousness. Christ Jesus had lived the perfect life in every respect. Moreover both Christ and his righteousness were very accessible. No great heroic acts were necessary to find Christ. He didn't have to be pursued into the heavens to find him or into depths of hell for that matter. He had died by crucifixion. That is true but God had raised him from the dead. He had ascended into heaven and been seated as Lord. That also is true but by the preaching of the gospel, Christ is brought near.

The receiving of Christ's righteousness and thus being saved is all very accessible. Being declared right before God is as easy and as difficult as having that inward conviction of trusting that when Jesus died on the cross it was for sins. It is believing that when he died it was no ordinary death but a death in which the punishment for our sins was borne in him, that he took our place and was punished for us, that he became sin for our sake. That is half the story. The other half of the story is that the perfect righteousness of Christ is at the same time transferred to us, so that we become the righteousness of God. It is a complete salvation whereby not only are we forgiven by Christ's death but also declared righteous because of his life. The one requirement is that we believe, for by believing in him we receive the blessings of his death and resurrection life.

Following this inward conviction must then come the outward expression of that inward conviction. What we believe in our hearts we must express

Romans 10:4-15

with our lips. We are to confess that the Jesus who died for us has been raised from death by God as a sign that his sacrifice has been accepted by God. We are then declared to have the same righteousness of our Saviour. We are justified before God.

It was this choice of righteousness by faith that Paul wanted to present before Rome and not only Rome but then before Spain. He was convinced that this was the only way that anyone, Jew or Gentile, could be saved and he confirmed his conviction by quoting from the Old Testament prophets Isaiah, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame “ and Joel, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved”.

Paul then raises a series of related questions. If calling upon the Lord is the only way that people can be saved how shall they call upon him if they haven't believed? If they are going to believe they need to hear. How can they hear if there is no preacher? How can they have the preacher unless the preacher be sent?

This obviously had great relevance for the purpose of the letter to the Romans. How can those beyond the church in Rome hear without preachers like Paul whether they be in the city and suburbs or in faraway places like Spain? We know Paul got to Rome whether he got to Spain or not is a question we cannot answer.

Romans 10:4-15

The more relevant question for us however is how shall the people beyond our churches hear? Who shall speak of the salvation Christ offers in our streets and clubs? Who shall tell of the salvation he offers beyond our shores?

Let us pray that God will raise up such people who have the “beautiful feet” that bear the messengers who bring the saving work of Christ to the people.