

We left off last time by finishing chapter 9, where Paul tells us that God's plan of salvation includes the Gentiles, because God is sovereign and he has mercy on whom he will have mercy. He cites the prophets of old to say God's plan of salvation always included those who were not part of the Hebrew people by lineage.

Today we pick it up with chapter 10 – (read chapter 10). In this chapter Paul asserts that there are 2 ways in salvation history – to achieve righteousness. One path asserts that you have to earn righteousness based on your own merit by following and living in accordance with God's law. This was the way provided by God to the Jews. The second way is the righteousness that comes only by faith in Jesus Christ. The new way of being declared righteous being ushered in by Jesus.

In chapters 9, 10 and 11, Paul begins each of these chapters by stating his deep concern for his own people, the Jews.

10:1 – Paul says his heart and prayer is for Israel to be saved.

Vs. 2 – They have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened.

Vs. 3 – They are ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God and they strive instead to achieve their own righteousness. The Jews did not accept the righteousness God provides to all in Jesus Christ.

Vs. 4 – Paul says – Christ is the end of the Law as a means to being righteous, but everyone who has faith in Jesus Christ is justified.

In these first 4 verses, Paul is saying the Jews were wrong in how they sought righteousness. No one can achieve righteousness; it is a free gift from God through Jesus Christ. It is God's grace alone that justifies us.

Vs. 5 – Paul asserts that his view of justification by faith is scriptural. It is not some new idea he has thought up. He cites Leviticus 18:1-5 (read these verses). God tells Moses in vs. 5 of Leviticus that by keeping my ordinances and statutes you will live. Righteousness and justification, and life, come from obeying God's law.

Vs. 6-8 – are based on Deuteronomy 30:11-14. (read these verses). Paul now says – righteousness based on faith, "the word is very near to you, on your lips and in your hearts, this word which we preach" Faith comes from the hearing of God's Word.

Vs. 9 – an important verse – Paul says: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" So Paul is saying righteousness and justification are gifts to be received from a loving God, they are sheer grace and mercy. They come from hearing God's Word, proclaiming Jesus Christ to the world and from believing in your heart. It is interesting in verse 9 – Paul puts proclaiming Jesus Christ to the world, before believing. Both are important.

Vs. 10 – Paul reverses the order. He says: "man believes with his heart, and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. So Paul makes the critically important point in vs. 9 & 10 that proclaiming and believing are both very important to the Christian life. Sadly, the church has lost the emphasis that Paul places on the proclamation of the Gospel by all believers. We are to tell others the sacred story of salvation. Churches today do not have the passion of sharing the Good News of God in Christ, we instead tend to focus far too much on believing as if the Christian enterprise is a private piety kind of thing. Yes we gather on Sundays for discipleship, we worship to deepen our faith. But when we leave these walls of St. Bede's, we are then called to share the good news with the world outside our doors. Sadly to many Christians today, evangelism is a word we do not like to hear or focus on. But to Paul proclamation goes hand in hand with believing. Maybe we really do not believe, so we do not proclaim. Maybe we are caught up in the politically correct reality of our day, that proclaiming the Gospel is offensive so we choose not to do so.

Vs. 11 – Paul says: "no one who believes in Him will be put to shame". Isaiah 28:16 – Read – Paul also quotes Isaiah 28:16 in chapter 9 vs. 33 – He now quotes it again in chapter 10:11.

Vs 12-13 – Paul says – “there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon Him. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” We call upon the name of the Lord because of our own inadequacy. We cannot save ourselves. Salvation and faith are pure gifts of grace from God.

Vs. 14-21 – deal with worldwide proclamation of the Gospel, known as evangelism.

Vs. 14 – God asks the rhetorical question: How can a person call upon the name of the one who they have not believed in? How can they believe in one of whom they have never heard? Paul then goes on to answer his own question.

Preaching of the Word is Paul’s answer. The world will be converted and come to faith by the hearing of God’s Word, by hearing the sacred story of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ. The preaching of the Word is not meant to be what Nate and I do on Sunday morning from a church pulpit. It is the responsibility of all believers to proclaim the Good News. There were no churches, there were no pulpits, when Paul says these amazing words. Proclamation is the responsibility of all who believe. We are all called to become apostles, “the sent ones”, not just the professional clergy.

Vs. 15 – Paul says: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”. Notice importantly Paul did not say: “how beautiful are the mouths of those who preach Good News”. He chooses to focus on the feet, because Paul knows it is only when we travel to tell others, that people will hear God’s Word and receive it and be saved. The church has “marching orders”, we travel as an army on foot. How beautiful are the feet of those who carry God’s Word to the highways and byways, so that people can hear and be saved. God’s Word, when proclaimed and shared does not come back to God empty.

Vs 16-21 – Paul deals with Israel’s failure to believe, even though they have heard. He cites – Isaiah 53:1, Psalm 19:4, Deuteronomy 32:21 (vs. 19), and Isaiah 65:1-2 (vs 20-21).

Vs. 21 is poignant. Paul says: “But of Israel he says, all day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people”. So Paul concludes this chapter by saying – even when God’s Word is proclaimed and heard, people still refuse to accept the good news God offers them. Many people still choose to go through life by living independently from God’s grace.

Why do you think people refuse such a gift of such great magnitude and eternal consequences?