

## Missions Month 2024, Great Co-Missionaries, A Great Urgency, Romans 10:9-15, 2/18/24

Romans 10:9-15

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

<sup>14</sup> 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? <sup>15</sup> 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 Romans 10, Paul is going to tell us three simple truths about the Gospel.

### #1 We Have Great News.

Two weeks ago my phone was blowing up with texts in the middle of the service, which is very unusual, my dad was rushed to the ER. And so when I had the opportunity to finally catch up with the family text string and find out what we going on I texted our staff and our small group and asked everyone to pray for him. About an hour later, my mom texted me back- “great news- the surgery was successful, scans are clear, this issue is treatable.” Relief and gratitude washed over me and I couldn’t wait to share on my text thread the great news- “Thank you for your prayers, it’s the best outcome we could have asked for.”

We love to share great news. Can you think of something that you just couldn’t wait to tell all your friends and family? “I’m in love!” “We’re pregnant!” “She said yes!” “I got in to my #1 choice for college!” The gospel is great news. In fact, that’s what the word Gospel means. Paul shows us four reasons why it is so great.

### It's Clear and Simple!

<sup>9</sup> 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. Here Paul is using declare and believe synonymously, that your mouth is repeating what your heart believes: that Jesus saves! The good news is so clear and simple that it can be shared to a remote village across a language barrier, it can be understood by a child, some with cognitive disabilities can grasp it and believe it. You don’t need to have a certain education level, or wealth or power to access it.

### It's free!

Did Paul say “if you believe in your heart, read your Bible 30 minutes a day, pray 3x a day, don’t say any more bad words and recycle you will be saved?” No! You don’t have to do a certain

number of works...Good outweigh your bad...This is what separates every other religion from the Gospel of Jesus.

Rio was telling me that many Muslim people in Indonesia will spend their entire savings to make their pilgrimage to Mecca, which is one of the 5 Pillars of Islam required. Some will sell their homes to do this. Why? Because they believe they must work off their sins to earn Allah's favor. Every other religion says that we have to climb a ladder to reach heaven, the Gospel says that Jesus climbed the ladder down to us. It's a free gift of grace, we just have to open it!

**It's Sure!** Even after all the fervent obedience to the 5 Pillars, if you ask a Muslim if they have certainty if they are going to heaven when they die, they will most likely tell you, no, if Allah wills. You talk to the average American, they will say, I hope my good outweighs my bad, I hope so, if God exists...but in their most honest and vulnerable moments, late at night or after a bad decision, many will tell you- there is a sense of dread of death, anxiety about what is going to happen. But the wonderful news of the gospel is there is assurance! Paul didn't say, if you call upon the name there's a chance...he might hear you...or let's hope...he said, **YOU WILL be saved.** He got this from Jesus himself. **John 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."**

**It's Available to All people!**

**"Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

It is open for all people, people of every culture, every religious background, the greatest and the least of sinners, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated...you can be in an executive round table making billion-dollar deals or in a back alley with a needle in your arm. Jesus says to the prostitute and the thief and the religious Pharisee...Come unto me all who are weary, and I will give you rest.

Wow. Isn't this great news? And this is just scratching the surface...so much more we could say about what the gospel does in us when we believe, transforming us, freeing us, giving us an unconditional love and acceptance and peace, a new family... Just take in the Great News of the Gospel for you! Even if you are here and you are skeptical about everything I just said, even you have to say, "Man, IF that's all true, that is the greatest news in the world!" If you have trusted Jesus already, have you pondered how great the Gospel really is? Something I often think is, "Where would I be today if I hadn't given my life to Jesus at 18 years old?"

**#2 Great News is meant to be shared.**

**<sup>14</sup> 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? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?**

Do you see the connection? Follow the logic here...He's saying, "Look how great the gospel is, it's simple, it's free, it's sure, it's available for all people! We have this great news but no one is going to be able to access this news unless you share it with them, and you are only going to share it with them if you believe God has sent you for this very purpose- to share it!"

We like to ask these philosophical questions like "If a tree falls in the forest, but no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?" I have a better one, "If we have this great news but we don't share it with anyone do we really believe it's great?"

So why aren't we sharing our faith more? Well you heard Rio last week share some barriers, recently the Barna Group released a comprehensive study on why Christians are increasingly reluctant to share their faith. Let me share a few of their findings. Barna said the research indicates that increasingly Christians believe this false notion: **Spiritual conversations take place in special places, during special moments, by special people.**

"Every Christian has a responsibility to share their faith." In 1993, nine out of 10 Christians who had shared their faith agreed (89%). Today, just two-thirds say so (64%)—a 25-point drop.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that some of us believe that a special few professionals, evangelists, extroverts who are called to share and the rest of us financially give toward that, and just try to live good lives. Quick poll- raise of us hands: how many of you know how to speak a language? OK how many of you know the gospel? How many of you know anyone who does not yet know and believe the gospel? You have just qualified to be among the group of people that Paul says have been sent to share the great news! Your confession is your calling. Your salvation is your sending. Every disciple is meant to be a disciple-maker!

It's not just for the professionals! And the research has also verified this. When asked who they prefer to have spiritual conversations with, non-Christians indicated strongly that friends are at the top of the list- 55%. Way down that list is with a pastor, only 6%!<sup>2</sup> "We think, well maybe if my friend, brother, my neighbor could meet Pastor Nate they would be interested in faith." They don't want to talk to me, they want to talk to you! 9 of 10 people who have had spiritual conversations that are life-changing, said they had it with someone they knew well.<sup>3</sup> In other words, life change happens because of spiritual conversations with everyday people.<sup>3</sup> Another reason we are reluctant to share, Barna says many Christians believe that **Spiritual Conversations are serious events and burdensome duties that are in the end, painful and regrettable.** This is just going to produce anxiety in me, ruin my relationships with people, make things awkward and I'm going to wish I never said anything.

I'm not sure where we came up with that, but Paul definitely didn't think that way. Paul concludes v.15 **"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"** Any feet people out there, who really think feet are beautiful? Don't raise your hand, that's weird. Most feet are not

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.barna.com/research/sharing-faith-increasingly-optional-christians/>

<sup>2</sup> The Reluctant Witness, Don Everts, p.70

<sup>3</sup> The Reluctant Witness, Don Everts, p.69

beautiful...and I've seen some of yours, you shouldn't wear sandals. How much worse were feet in the first century!

So what is he talking about? Sharing our faith is beautiful. It's a delight to God. God is active and present wherever his salvation is announced. You know what's beautiful about the feet of those who share? **1/3 of all adults in America claim they have personally made a big change in their life because of a conversation about faith.** "You mean I can be forgiven? I don't have to wallow in this guilt and shame?" "I can be accepted and loved unconditionally by God?" "I can have a relationship with God and sense his presence?" "I can obtain an identity and purpose that is bigger than my job or my performance?" "I have access to a power to overcome my bad habits?" Life transformation- that's beautiful!

But it's not just the results that are beautiful, it's the experience of sharing. Interestingly, the research concludes that instead of the experience of burden and regret, experientially the opposite is true. In the study they found that when people are having a **spiritual conversation, they are more prone to laughing together, experiencing peace, joy and even exhilaration. Few reported feeling stress, annoyance, confusion and anger.**

And this has absolutely been my experience. It's a powerful human connection to tell someone about what God has done in my life in the gospel and what he is able to do in other people's lives. I find myself smiling uncontrollably, and they are smiling too. There is often curiosity and intrigue. They open up and start talking about personal things. Recently, after a spiritual conversation with a neighbor they said to me, "I love talking to you because it's refreshing to talk about something other than sports, the weather, the news or politics." Rarely have I had someone angry or annoyed that I shared with them. People are spiritually hungry!

And so, We Have Great News. It's meant to be shared.

**#3 Go Share it.** I told you it's simple. We hear a sense of urgency in the way Paul is writing this, don't we? How will people hear the good news unless we share it? There is an urgency because we don't know how long we have, or the other person has in this life. It's urgent because every day that someone is separated from God is a day they aren't experiencing the hope, assurance, joy, peace, healing and transformation He brings. It's urgent because people lost in their sin will make decisions that may not be aligned with God's heart. It's urgent because we don't know when the Holy Spirit is working on someone's heart, and how long that window is open before it closes again. This is why the Bible says, "Make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil."

Now, when I say the urgency of the Gospel, I don't mean that we should all be shouting at people that the ship is sinking in an irritated, confrontational and anxious tone or that we should carpet bomb an entire neighborhood or all the cars in the parking lot with gospel tracks or fill someone's inbox with evange-spam. I don't see that as the model in Scripture, Jesus didn't do that, I don't see this method as the prescribed means. "Well, John the Baptist did it like that!" True- but there is only one of those, he was a prophet for a very specific time in

history to fulfill a very specific calling, and he got his head cut off for picking a fight with Herod and his new wife.

The kind of urgency I'm encouraging is making the most of the opportunity when it is presented. In Galen Burkholder's book *Ordinary Disciples* he tells the story of how his wife Michelle came to faith. Michelle didn't grow up in a Christian home, but she sensed something missing in her life and had a sense of God but didn't know who He was. One evening after High School, Michelle was hanging out with several of her good friends who were talking about going to see a movie and she asked if they could join them and they sheepishly said, "Sure if you want to." It was the movie *The Late Great Planet Earth* based on the book by Hal Lindsay. For the first time she heard someone declare that there is a God and you can have a relationship with Him through Jesus. She felt a conviction but didn't know what to do about it. A few days later, she heard these same friends talk about an evening church service, and Michelle again asked if she could go along. They said, "Sure if you want to." That evening she heard a clear gospel invitation, and she surrendered her life to the Lord.

A service, Michelle told her friends "I knew there was something different about you. I saw it through our years in high school. But why didn't you ever tell me how important it is that I know Jesus?" They responded, "We didn't think you'd care." Michelle, believe what she was hearing, "You didn't think I would care that I can have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ? That I wouldn't care where I was going when I died?" They were speechless.<sup>4</sup> Friends- let us go share the great news! How do I do that?

-Striking up a conversation with the person next to you **on a flight**, and prayerfully looking for an opportunity to have a spiritual conversation.

-**Walking your dog** with your neighbors without your air pods and talking with others

-Asking your **teammates on the field** if you can pray before the game for them and then see where it leads

-**Friends at school** about the missions trip you are going on this Summer and why you decided to do it.

-**In the coffee shop**: Putting your Bible on the table

-**In your office**: Talking to your cube mate about your weekend plans that include church

-Identifying people **in your neighborhood** who need service projects done.

Next week we are going to unveil a 6-month initiative in order to reach our community. We can do this, we can do it together, and resource you, equip you, send you, pray for you, make it simple. But this week- what I want you to pray about is: **What is so great about the gospel?**

---

<sup>4</sup> Ordinary Disciples, Galen Burkholder & Brother Tefera, p.100-101.