



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Steps of Grace

March 22, 2020

Romans 10:13-15

Clint Pressley

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

(Pastor prays)

Let's take our minds off of the constant news cycle of the Coronavirus and steep our hearts in just three verses for a little while. We have before us one of the great evangelistic passages in the Bible tucked right here in Romans 9 and 10. It's right in the middle of Paul's discussion of man's responsibility in salvation and God's sovereignty in salvation. Right in the middle of this treatise, on God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, you have Paul's personal evangelistic strategy. Paul has created a connected chain of steps that must be followed if a person is to be saved. Those steps are links in a chain that's anchored in the Bible and reaches to the cross. You'll notice when you read the passage, the four rhetorical questions are linked together by repeating the verbs. Let's read it again and see if you get the sequence. Let's start in verse 13.

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If the end result is hoping to see people call on the Lord to be saved, I think this passage shows us how we get there. But to see it, we have to take the six verbs in the passage and put them in opposite order.

Let's start at the bottom of verse 15. You might come up with a sentence that would be something like this. God sends preachers, preachers preach, people hear, hearers believe, and believers call on the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. This whole divine plan of salvation involves the church taking up the task of living and speaking the Gospel. And have we ever had a more pressing time than now to find ways to share Christ and to do so with urgency?

The Gospel Works When the Church Acts

Let's take the passage and pull it apart and see what we come up with.

We need to know where to start

Let's zoom out a minute and listen to the four questions in these two verses. They start in verse 14. How will they call on him whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him in whom they've never heard? And how will they hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? Now look at verse 15. Let's see what it's based on. Paul quotes the Bible verse Isaiah 52:7. *How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!* When it comes to pointing people to Christ, we've got to start where Paul starts, with the Bible.

The passage Paul quotes, in its context, is written to Israel in Babylonian exile with the hope that deliverance is coming. We start with the Bible that tells us that God is holy, and people are sinners separated from God. And when they die in that state of separation, people go to Hell. But, it doesn't have to be like that. The Bible tells us that Christ, all God and all man, came to fulfill the law, lived a righteous, perfect life for us, then took the punishment for us on the cross. God raised Him from the dead and now everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved! I hope you will do that today. We need to know where to start.

We need to know the mission

If the Bible is where we start, what's the mission!? Verse 15 asks, how are they to preach unless they are sent? The Bible is the foundation and the mission is living sent. That word sent is *apostello*. It's where we get the word "Apostle." But that word has a broader meaning. It can mean missionaries and church planters. It can be churches and, on the street level, it's the people of God, you. Isn't that what Jesus said: As the father has sent me, so I am sending you? The idea of being sent assumes we operate under a higher authority. We are the "sendees", sent ones. God is the sender! Right this second, in the middle of this worldwide halt, God has

sent you with the beautiful Gospel message, the Gospel that teaches us sovereignty, providence, grace, the cross. We need to know where to start. We need to know the mission.

We need to feel the urgency

If we follow the links in this chain, Christ sends preachers and preachers preach and people hear. Or it might be easier for you to go to verse 14 and read it to the end. ¹⁴ *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?* ¹⁵ *And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*

The sent ones, preach. But not like what I am doing now or every other Sunday morning. The word "preach" here is *kerusso*. It's the idea of a herald, an announcer, someone who is given a vital message and told to proclaim it, and it is usually in the context of giving a warning, a warning of something terrible coming. But the warning is not for condemnation; the warning is there to tell of the danger so that it might be avoided.

Jonathan Edwards' most famous message, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, is a warning. He preaches with vivid language to explain the wrath of God so that people will flee to the grace of God in Jesus. You should listen to Max McClean's version of it. He spends some time talking to senior adults and how susceptible they are to dying and going to Hell without Christ. I thought of that with COVID-19 and all our precautions. If you are over 60 and have not come to Christ, you are in double danger. Consider that danger and flee to the grace of God found in Jesus and His finished work on the cross.

I just finished a book called ***The Rising Tide***. It is about the great flood of the Mississippi River in 1927 that changed a nation. The hardest hit areas were in the Mississippi Delta, especially Greenville, Miss., where the mighty river broke through at Mounds Levee and, as millions of gallons of water rushed toward Greenville, guns were fired in the air, train whistles were blown, church bells rang - all sounding a warning so that some people might run to safety and be saved. *Kerruso*. It is a herald. The Gospel is good news but only if it gets there.

And maybe you are watching for the first time and you are scared of dying. Run, flee to Christ. Look to Christ, the friend of sinners and He will indeed save you. Church, we must feel the urgency; the pulsating river of God's unmitigated wrath could break forth at any moment and our great hope is God's saving love found in Jesus. We need to know where to start. We need to know the mission. And we need to feel the urgency.

We need to be clear on the message

So let's start again at the bottom. Christ sends preachers, preachers preach, people hear, hearers believe. Or if it is easier to understand, let's go back to verse 14. *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?* You can't believe in what you don't know. That's why we have missions. Faith comes by hearing; hearing is logically prior to believing. Apart from hearing the message, no one can believe.

Now zoom in with me to verse 14. Do you see that little phrase, “in him of whom they have never heard”? There is no “of “ in the Greek text. It should read “how are they to believe in him whom they have never heard”?! To hear someone share the Gospel is to hear Christ. It's what Jesus told His disciples in Luke 10: 16. *“The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”* We need to be clear on the message. The message is Christ and Him crucified, resurrected, and reigning as Lord. The message is Christ. We need to know where to start. We need to know the mission. We need to feel the urgency and we need to be clear on the message.

We need to press to the Gospel

I want to take the verbs together here. Let's recite the sentence and then look at verse 14. Christ sends preachers, preachers preach, people hear, hearers believe, believers call and those who call are saved. Or you will find it in verse 14 in the form of a question: How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? Paul here is pointing us to a saving faith, the kind of faith that calls out to God for salvation.

A saving faith believes facts. The facts are the holiness of God, the sinfulness of your heart, and the work of Christ as the only means of salvation. A saving faith believes that Jesus is Lord. Salvation always points to a person, not a set of rules or ideas or “positive thoughts”. In this passage and the way Paul has presented it, calling and believing are separate events. Believing God exists is passive. Calling on Christ to save is something different altogether. Believing is contained in what we think and that can change. Calling on the Lord is surrender and that never changes. It's not enough to say we believe. James says even the demons believe and quake.

I want you to call like Jonah called in the belly of the fish. The Bible says, *I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me, out of the belly of Sheol I cried and you heard my voice.* I want you to call like Peter did when he stepped out of the boat to walk on the water. And

when seeing the wind and the waves he was afraid and cried out, "Lord save me!" Because everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. For Christians, listen, for Hickory Grove, the Gospel of Jesus assures us. The Lord is good. The Lord saves and sustains, and the Lord is going to take care of you. For you if you're not a Christian, this virus is here to awake your heart to believe what Christ has done on the cross and in believing that, call out to Him and be saved. And so, today, I pray you will come to Jesus. Come to Christ and be saved.

(Pastor prays)