



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

No Panic in the Gospel

March 29, 2020

Romans 10:16-21

Clint Pressley

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." ¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." ²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." ²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

(Pastor prays)

Not too long ago I read a book entitled, **The Armies of Pestilence**. In it, the author cataloged all the known pandemics throughout history, and I learned a few lessons from that morbid book. As bad as it seems right now, compared with known history, it could be a lot worse. It is God's grace that we live at this time in history; we can't be together, but we have technology that at least can keep us connected.

Throughout the last 2,000 years, whenever there was a plague or a pestilence or a pandemic, it has always been God's people who showed great resolve, ministered to the hurting and glorified the name of Jesus. And the dominating power behind such resolve is the Gospel of Christ. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus didn't just save us; that Gospel sustains and soothes us so that we can live without fear. We can think about the future without panic and we can find ways to honor God in the present. The Gospel - we never can stray from the Gospel. It's the rock under our feet so that we don't sink and the hope that we breathe in so that we don't panic.

And today, as we listen to the Apostle Paul, I want you to hear and feel the emotion that Paul has for lost people; especially for Jews like himself. You've got to take chapter 9 and chapter 10 together. Chapter 9 is all about God's sovereign power in salvation and points us to God's work in grace alone. But in chapter 10, Paul takes the spotlight and shines it on us, on people, on you and says that we are fully responsible for the choices we make to receive or reject the Gospel. Paul specifically deals with the Jews who were so close to the Gospel and yet missed it by so much. I'm hoping today that you believers will be strengthened by the word of God to love the Gospel more and rejoice in God's good provision. And for you who are so close, I hope you will turn and yield to the grace of God found at the cross of Jesus.

The Gospel Always Defeats Panic

Let's hold the Gospel up and look at different angles of it.

The Gospel Demands Obedience

In verse 15, Paul said that the very feet of those who preach the good news are beautiful because they bring the message of Christ: His perfect life, His substitutionary death on the cross and His victorious resurrection. And anyone who believes that will be saved. But then in verse 16 he introduces a problem. ¹⁶ *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"* Paul quotes Isaiah 53, it's the suffering servant passage that points to Christ on the cross, but the wording on the front end of that verse is troubling. Paul says "but" or contrary to what might have been expected, not all the Israelites, God's chosen people, accepted the good news. And he says it in a strange way. They haven't obeyed the Gospel. The word "obedience" is important to Paul.

Now for those of you who think you're Christians and yet have not lived like it for years, you need to listen to this. Paul's concept of faith always involves commitment to the Lordship of Jesus. He says that several times. I'll give you 1 example. It is in 2 Thessalonians 1:8. ⁸ *in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* God inflicts vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Now we need to be clear here. Obedience does not *save* you; it's evidence that you *are* saved. In reading, ***Heretics and Believers: the History of English Reformation*** by Peter Marshall, he talks about justification by faith. We don't obey to *get* God's grace; we obey *because* of God's grace, so that the obedience becomes evidence of God's work of grace. A good diagnostic question to ask is, "What is it that makes you think you are a Christian?" Is it something that

happened years ago or is it a life you're living today? The Gospel demands obedience. Hold that thought a little while we tackle another.

The Gospel is centered on Jesus

Look what Paul does in verse 17. He brings back that sequence he quoted in verse 14. So faith comes from hearing. Now, look where hearing comes from. And hearing through the Word of Christ. That's another odd phrase you don't get to see very often. The Word of Christ. Verse 17 is really succinct. If you were to read it in Greek, you would see that there are no verbs in it.

There's been some discussion about this verse. Does Paul mean the word that Christ taught or the teaching about the historical Jesus? I think he left it vague on purpose. The word of Christ is Jesus Christ conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, fully God and fully man who lived a perfect life keeping all of God's law and then died on the cross in the place of sinners. He took the full wrath of God and was buried. God raised Him from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is now Lord of all. That's the word of Christ that must be believed.

Then the teachings of Christ are to be lived so that the whole of our Christianity is Christ and that's where we stand. That's who we cling to. The Bible is a book about Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is about taking you to Jesus so that every sermon and every study should take us to the wounds of Jesus. That's why I would ask you this morning to come to Jesus. Believe Jesus, surrender to Jesus, let go of addiction and anger and pride and shame and hurt and hardness and sin and believe the word of Christ. The Gospel demands obedience. The Gospel is centered on Jesus.

The Gospel removes excuses

Notice what Paul does in verses 18 through 19. He asks two questions and then answers them both with Bible verses, one from Psalms and the other from Deuteronomy. Let's look at the first one in verse 18. *¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."* He is speaking of the Jews here and in Greek he uses a double negative to intensify. Like I might say, if someone were hit by a train, he is "graveyard dead." He's intensifying to make the point that, Yes they have heard. And to drive it even further he quotes Psalm 19:4. *⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."*

Or if you go read Psalm 19:1,

*The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

It's a passage on general revelation, it's the same thing he argued back in Romans 1. The revelation of God is available to every person through the created order so that they and we are without excuse. In addition, this letter in Romans was written 25 to 30 years after the resurrection of Jesus. The message saturated Jerusalem like it has saturated America; so that, people, you are without excuse. Then he asked another question in verse 19. Do they not understand? He answers that by quoting Deuteronomy. ¹⁹ *But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry."* Those Gentiles who only had general revelation responded. Paul's point is that every chance is being given. God's offer of free grace to you today becomes what you are responsible for so that, if you reject the Gospel today, one day when you are in Hell you will look back at March 29, 2020, and regret that you didn't respond in faith to the free offer of God's grace in Jesus. The Gospel demands obedience. The Gospel is centered on Jesus. The Gospel removes excuses.

The Gospel is grace

Let me show you what I mean here in verse 20. The Jews saw themselves as being close to God, knowing God, delivered by God. They had historical background and tradition. They had the law and the prophets. They had the promised land and considered themselves as God-fearing and yet they missed grace. To drive this point further, in verse 20, Paul quotes Isaiah 65: 1 describing Gentiles. ²⁰ *Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."*

The Jews thought they were close to God because of their cultures, upbringing and tradition. But the truth is that grace is no respecter of persons. God saves those that have no background, no history and no reason to even think of God. That's the point of grace. It can't be earned; it must be given, and it resides only in Jesus. Most of us are Gentiles and it is God's sovereign grace that we are saved —and that grace is Jesus. It's His life, His death on the cross and His resurrection. Let me give you one last thing about the Gospel.

The Gospel shows the depth of God's love

Look what Paul does in verse 21. He quotes Isaiah 65:2. ²¹ *But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."* Any parent who has a child who has grown up and has rejected the faith you taught them, you've felt like this. You see the

length of God's concern, all day long. It's a continued asking, calling, texting, praying. Our God has time after time spared your life, kept you safe and provided for your need all in the effort to turn your heart to Him.

God's kindness leads to repentance. It shows the depth of God's concern. All day long I've stretched out my hands. This is the only place in the New Testament. It's the idea of arms open saying, "please come home."

In the text, the people remain disobedient and hard, but it doesn't have to be like that for you. Even now, God is waiting to receive you as His own. Run now. Run to Jesus, run to Him while you still can and come receive the free grace of the Gospel of Christ.

Pray with me, all of you watching. It's a message that needs a response. There is a place on this website that you can do that. Click the "prayer request" and ask that we pray for you or someone you love. We will pray for you and contact you if you desire to give your life to Christ.

(Pastor prays)