

Romans 10:14-21

The ministry of the Word

- At the heart of Christian ministry is the proclamation of the Gospel. There are a number of interesting and important questions that challenge us as we address this subject.
 - 1) What about those who have "apparently" never heard the Gospel?
 - 2) What makes preaching and teaching effective?
 - 3) What is the origin of saving faith?

1. The preaching of the Word

¹⁴ How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!*"

- The chain looks like this (send - preach - hear - believe - call = salvation). The role that God plays is in "sending" the preacher. Ordained and commissioned preachers are to faithfully preach. Preaching should inspire a faith reception resulting in "calling on the name of the Lord" resulting in salvation.
- It is important to note that the verbal proclamation of the Gospel is as central to salvation as the response of faith and the calling out to God.
 1. In some postmodern circles verbal teaching is viewed as irrelevant and secondary to social ministries of justice, community building, worship, etc.
 2. In other circles, teaching is primarily inspirational and motivational with little attention given to information and clarification of Biblical revelation.
- The OT quote is from Isa.52:7 where the context is a call to Israel from exile in Babylon.
- Paul implies that legitimate preaching is commissioned by God through the church.
- Preaching and teaching have a significant role of in the life of the church.
 1. Teaching is a vital part of Jesus' commission to his disciples. Matt.28:19-20 "¹⁹ God therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ **teaching** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 2. Teaching and preaching are among the basic equipping ministries of the church. Eph.4:11-12 "¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as **pastors and teachers**, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of the service, to the building up of the body of Christ. ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the 'Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

3. Paul viewed preaching and teaching as closely related ministries. I Tim 2:7 “And for this I was appointed a **preacher** and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a **teacher** of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”
 4. The most important characteristic of good teaching is not eloquence but clarity and power. I Cor.1:17 “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to **preach the gospel**, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.”
- **How is teaching to be effective in bringing people to deeper faith and faithfulness?**

1. Teaching is a **spiritual gift** that should be respected.
2. The pattern found in **Rom.12:1-8** is important.

“¹ I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. ³ For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, {let each exercise them accordingly}: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

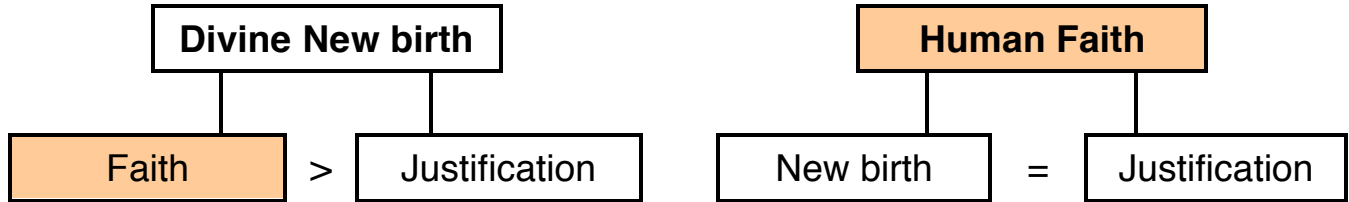
- a. We must be grounded in the “mercies” (grace) of God. Guilt and fear are poor impulses for the proper ministry of gifts.
- b. We must be willing to “die to selfish motives” and be renewed in our mind or attitude. Our gifts cannot be allowed to become the source of our need for security and significance.
- c. We must be willing to minister with humility, respecting the full diversity of gifts in the body.
- d. We must be willing to use our gifts within the boundaries of our faith and the needs present.

2. The hearing of the Word

¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, “*Lord, who has believed our report?*” ¹⁷ So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- In Israel's case the preaching was not received with faith so salvation was missed. Israel could not claim that they had not heard.

- These verses raise a popular question - **What is the origin of faith?** There are a number of things that can be said. There are two views



“who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Jn.1:13

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” Jn.6:44

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;” Eph.2:8

“Because you have seen Me, you have believed” Jn.20:29

“faith {comes} from hearing” Rom.10:17

“reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.” Acts 19:8

- **I Cor.3:5-6** “⁵ What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”
- **Jesus' ministry was one of action and teaching that continued through the apostles.** **Acts1:1** “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach.”
- Paul often is said to persuade his hearers with his teaching. Acts

3. The believing of the Word

18 But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “*Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.*” 19 But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, “*I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, By a nation without understanding will I anger you.*” 20 And Isaiah is very bold and says, “*I was found by those who sought Me not, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.*” 21 But as for Israel He says, “*All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.*”

- In chapter 9 Paul explains the setting aside of Israel in terms of *God's* sovereign choice and plan.
- These verses raise a popular question - **What about those who have “apparently” never heard the Gospel?** There are a number of things that can be said.

1. Paul recognizes that revelation has come to people who did not seem to get it. Israel had *Gospel* revelation available that she did not recognize as such.

Rom.1:20-21 “²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor

Him as God, or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

2. There are Scriptural examples of individuals who did not understand the Gospel (as we know it) but responded in faith to God and were received by God's grace. There is room to be cautious in passing judgment on the extent of God's mercy.
 - a. In the Old Testament there are examples of God's grace extending beyond the Abrahamic covenant.
 1. **Holy Pagans** - Job, Abimelech (king of Gerar - Gen.20:1-18), Jethro (a priest of Midian - Ex.18:1-12),
 2. Jews who lived before Jesus was born - **Abraham**.
 3. The people of **Nineveh** (Jonah) were not required to visit the temple in Jerusalem or to become Israelites yet God received their repentance.
 4. **Abel, Enoch, Noah, Daniel** being neither Jews nor Christians, pleased God because they sought Him with the faith response which pleases Him (Heb.11:6)
 5. **Malachi 1:11** “From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.”
 6. **Isaiah 19:25** “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.”
 - b. In the New Testament there are examples of Gentiles who were included within the scope of God's salvation.
 1. **Melchizedek** (a Canaanite priest - Gen.14:17-24) Heb.6:20-7:18.
 2. The **Magi** (Matt.2:1-12)
 3. **Luke 18:9-14** God forgives the publican who simply asks for mercy.
 4. **Matthew 10:15; 11:22; 12:41-42** Some of the unexpected inhabitants of heaven - the Ninevites, the queen of Sheba, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah.
 5. **Acts 10:34-35** “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”
 6. **Acts 14:16-17** “In the past, He let all nations go their own way. Yet He has not left Himself without testimony.”
 - c. Special examples.
 1. **Babies** who die in infancy and individuals that are mentally challenged are commonly assumed to be graciously received by a loving God.
 2. **Postmortem encounters** - I Peter 3:19-20; 4:6
 - d. Conclusions

- There are no innocent people in the world, therefore don't assume that some folks don't need to hear about Jesus.
- Everyone has had some kind of witness of God's presence and authority, therefore don't assume that people have heard nothing.
- It is only Christ's substitutionary death and His resurrection that provide salvation for sinners, therefore preach Christ as the only way of salvation.
- Sinners are saved by faith in God; therefore preach personal faith and repentance.
- The content of that faith today is centered in a confession of Jesus as Savior and Lord, although it has not always been so, therefore respect the possibility of being saved without knowing the name of Jesus.
- Unorthodox saints may very well exist, therefore don't be surprised if God's mercy is wider than you had believed.
- God's ways are beyond our complete understanding, therefore you will not be able to figure it all out but you can obey.

“I have never been able to conjure up (as some great evangelical missionaries have) the appalling vision of the millions who are not only perishing but who will inevitably perish. On the other hand, as I have said, I cannot be a universalist. Between these extremes I cherish the hope that the majority of the human race will be saved.” *John Stott in Essentials: a Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue p327*