

Title: Sent

Text: Romans 10:1-15

Introduction:

During the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Trenton was a small but pivotal battle that took place on the morning of December 26, 1776. After crossing the Delaware River, the previous night, General George Washington led the Continental Army against Hessian soldiers garrisoned at Trenton. This victory by the American forces greatly boosted the sagging morale of an army on the verge of collapse and inspired others to enlist in the fight. The amazing part of the story is that a British agent had brought a message to the Hessian commander warning him of the potential for an attack. The Hessian commander, rather than reading the important message, stuck it in his pocket and never opened it. This allowed Washington's troops to surprise and overwhelm the Hessians.¹ In many ways, the battle was lost because a vital message was never received.

We live in a world where a battle rages. This conflict has eternal consequences for the participants. It is a spiritual battle for the hearts and souls of the human race. God, in His love for every person, has deemed that this battle be waged at all costs, and has chosen the church of Christ to be His conquering army. Eternity hinges on the obedience of His followers to go and to continually send more to the frontlines. Christ has assured us that the final victory will be ours, but the struggle for individual lives rests on the vital message of the Gospel being shared and received.

In Romans 10, God places the responsibility of lostness on man. God rejected Israel because Israel rejected the Gospel. Humans are lost and separated from God for one reason and one reason alone. It is because they have rejected Christ. We cannot blame someone else for our lostness. At least five times in this chapter (vv. 8,11,12,16, and 21), the responsibility of the people is implicitly emphasized, concluding with a plea in verse 21: "But to Israel He says: All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

In Paul's message of warning, he shares his burden for his countrymen, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved" (v. 1). His burning passion is to see his neighbors, family, and friends redeemed. This burden will not allow him to keep this vital message in his pocket. He is compelled to share it with anyone who will listen. Paul's passionate heart also compels us to sit up and to listen carefully.

I. The fallacy of zeal (vv. 1-5).

Paul recognized that the Jewish people had a genuine zeal. He shares in v. 2 that "they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." The people of Israel had been cured of their lust

¹ "Battle of Trenton." *United States History*. Accessed January 22, 2016.
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h679.html>

for false gods following the Babylonian captivity. As a nation, they never again deserted the faith of their fathers. They were zealous in their religion.

Paul reminds them and reminds us that zeal alone is not the answer. The sad fact today is that countless people in our communities, across our nation, and around the world are zealous in their beliefs, but still hopelessly lost. They are missing the one thing that can transform their lives and give them eternal assurance.

Every person has placed their belief in something, whether it is a false religion, a misguided cause, or even themselves. There are few people more dedicated than Mormon missionaries. The fervor of home-grown cults across our nation is self-evident. No one questions the zeal of committed Muslims. The passion of the Evolutionist, pro-choice activist, or gay rights militant consumes their existence.

Romans clearly teaches that zeal alone will not save us in the end. Even a zeal for the God of the Bible does not guarantee Heaven. Paul's strong words should do away with ideas like, "I just cannot believe that such sincere, good, honest, caring people are really lost." The Bible is clear: sincerity never replaces truth. For example, one may sincerely reject the law of gravity, but jumping off the roof will quickly reveal the fallacy of their disbelief. One can be sincerely wrong, and some errors can be deadly.

Romans teaches us in vv. 2-4 that we cannot save ourselves and become righteous before God. Instead, we must come to God through a believing faith in Christ. This is the righteousness that God desires and that restores us in relationship with our Creator. We cannot establish our own righteousness or set our own rules for living. God has created one way for people to have relationship with Him, to live life rightly, and to have the assurance of Heaven: we must come to God through Christ. We must accept what He has done on our behalf, and, by faith, place our belief in Him. This was and is a matter of life and death. Placing our faith in anything or anyone other than Christ is a deadly error. Only a saving faith in Jesus Christ will transform our lives and seal our eternity.

II. The Good News was meant to be sent (vv. 6-13).

Religious people have a tendency to complicate the matter of salvation. Paul warns of this, in vv. 6-13 of our text, loosely quoting Moses' final address, in Deuteronomy 30:12-14.

“But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into Heaven?’ (that is to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever

believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ (Romans 10:6-13)

Simply stated, the Bible teaches us that we do not need to go to Heaven or the place of death to find Christ. He is near us. Salvation is open to all. The Gospel of Christ, the word of faith, was and is available, accessible, and simple. “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v. 13).

Salvation is available to the person, who has grown up in a church and been exposed to truth all of their lives. Thankfully, by God’s grace, it is also available to a person with little to no spiritual background. I grew up in an unbelieving home with little spiritual influence, but, as a teenager, God’s truth was shared with me. I still remember kneeling on a gym floor at a youth crusade, in Nashville, Tennessee. At that moment, my eyes became wide open to the truth of our Biblical text in Romans. On that night, I was saved. I do not make apology for using the word “saved,” for that is precisely what happened. When I placed my faith in Christ, he rescued me from my past, my sins, my unbelief, and my wrong direction in life. He gave me hope, forgiveness, faith, and the right direction for living. He saved me, now and forever.

Why do so many miss the point? It’s because, the Gospel does not fit with their concept of religious self-exaltation. It is too simple. Foolishly, we would rather hold on to the false premise that we can somehow save ourselves.

The Good News of the Gospel is that it is simple enough for all to receive it. Following Christ will challenge the most learned person for a lifetime, and yet, thank God, it is so simple that a child can understand enough to come to Christ.

So, how do you and I respond to a world where one in three still have little access to the Gospel?

How do we respond to the fact that four out of ten people groups across our globe still have not heard this Good News?

How do we respond to the knowledge that almost 98% of the people who reside in Salt Lake City are lost, and over half of the metro area of Cincinnati are not affiliated with a religious body of any kind?

How do we respond to the fact that over 80% of our neighbors in the Commonwealth are not in a church of any kind on most Sundays?

How do we respond to the sea of lostness around us?

Romans, with its emphasis on “whoever calls,” reminds us that the Gospel was meant to be sent. God has commissioned His church to take the Good News to all. As followers of Christ, it should not be, “Will we go or will we send?” But, the Gospel compels us to go and to send until all have heard the saving message of Christ. For us, the questions should be, “How could we not go, and how could we not send, at least, one more?”

III. Christ Followers are sent (vv. 14-15).

The responsibility of the Gospel brings with it not only a proclamation by God to accept it, but a commission to take the Good News out to all the world. The Gospel demands that Christ followers be a sending people. The message entrusted to us is meant to be shared. Paul exhorts us to go and to send with four rhetorical questions:

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written; ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things.’” (Romans 10:14-15)

Sin destroys. It robs us from real life. Sin will steal the meaning and purpose from our lives. Sin separates us from God. Sin always leads to death.

The feet of those who bring the Gospel are beautiful because they bring a message of peace, hope, and eternal life. The Gospel is Good News because it opens people’s eyes to see a loving and good God, who desires to give life to all. Those who bring the Good News of Christ are setting captives free. Those who preach Christ are bringing life where there was death, healing where there was pain, and meaning where there no real purpose.

God did not declare that the messenger’s lips were beautiful, or his eyes of compassion, but declares how beautiful are his feet. Without the feet, the messenger would have never made it through the jungle, crossed the stream, or journeyed down the street. Unless the feet go, the message will never be heard.

Frederick Buechner once said, “Generally speaking, if you want to know who you really are, as distinct from who you like to think you are, keep an eye on where your feet take you.”²

Every believer should ask themselves, ‘Where are my feet taking me?’

God thinks feet are beautiful. Not because of their outward features, but because of where they can go. The Gospel demands that we send, so that all may hear the glad tidings of wonderful news. Those who know Christ are to be sent out. As the church commissioned by Christ to go, how could we dare not try to send, at least, one more?

² Frederick Buechner. *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. (Harper & Row Publishers). 27.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Battle of Trenton.” *United States History*. Accessed January 22, 2016.
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h679.html>

Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973. 27.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishing, 1991.

Additional sermon outlines:

Text: Romans 10:15

Title: A Beautiful Gift

- I.** The Sender
- II.** The Sent
- III.** The Gift

Text: Romans 10:15

Title: Messengers Sent by God

- I.** The Good News is a Sending Message
- II.** Christ Followers are a Sending People
- III.** Those Without Christ Await a Sending Transformation

Text: Romans 10:15

Title: Sent

- I.** Sent by God
- II.** Sent with a Mission
- III.** Sent for a Purpose