

ROMAN S
A Universal Gospel
Romans 10:12-21

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

One of the few things in this life that really lifts a man's spirit is hearing good news. Men pay attention to good news in business, pleasure, social preferment, ambition, and physical health. Go to any stock exchange and see men watch the ticker tape, or view the political candidates sitting up all night for election returns favorable to them.

Men will harken to Good news along every line except the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. More often than not they reject the greatest and most exciting news ever to hit the planet earth — they refuse the offer of a free and gracious salvation in Christ. It is astonishing that men would reject the good news of Christ and the salvation he has for them, but they do.

This was the exact problem of the Jews. The prophets, Christ, and the apostles all pointed out God's offer of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, but the Jews refused it. Why? Because they wanted to work their way to heaven and did not see the simplicity of salvation. Sadly but truly, salvation is so simple that men stumble over the "by grace through faith" process.

THE UNIVERSAL OFFER OF SALVATION — Romans 10:12-13

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Now that Christ has come, there are no spiritual privileges because of racial distinctions such as the Jews enjoyed in the Old Testament. There is no difference in Jew and Gentile — all must accept Jesus Christ by faith if they are to be saved and belong to the redeemed people of God.

In the spiritual realm there are no racial distinctions — no white, black, yellow or brown. All must trust Christ as personal Saviour. Further, only in Christ will racial prejudice be solved, for Christ changes a man's heart so that he can love all Christian brethren in Christ. Paul Johnson, a black student at Shenandoah Bible College said, "At this school I find no racial prejudice because we are all one in Christ."

Since all are sinners and separated from God, salvation is open to all who will receive Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. It is open to those who call upon Christ to deliver them from their sins and to give them eternal life.

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Salvation is offered universally to all men, and it becomes the possession of all who will receive Christ by faith. When a person calls, he shall be saved. This verse is a quote from Joel 2:32 to show that salvation has always been by faith, even in the Old Testament. It states a universal offer of salvation, not a universal salvation. The death of Christ is applied only to those who trust in Jesus Christ.

THE UNIVERSAL PREACHING OF SALVATION — Romans 10:14-15

“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 hear without a preacher?” Paul’s point is that a universal offer of the gospel demands a universal preaching of the gospel. Men cannot call on a Saviour in whom they have never believed, and to be sure, they cannot believe in a Christ of whom they have never heard. Someone must take the gospel to another person if that one is ever to be saved.

The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), earnest man though he was, did not understand even the luminous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah until the preacher sent to him opened the Scripture for him. In Acts 11:14, Cornelius, a Jewish proselyte, was commanded by the angel to send for Peter who was to “speak to thee words by which thou shalt be saved.”

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21).

This passage is not just speaking about ordained pastors and missionaries but about all Christians. The word “preacher” means “one who heralds a message,” thus putting out the message of Christ is everyone’s responsibility. The Overseas Missionary Fellowship has a motto that says, “You are either a missionary or a mission field.”

In this country men boast today of the Peace Corps, and this is a good secular organization, but Christians have had missions for two thousand years which have done more good for mankind than all the secular humanitarian organizations put together. True Christians are committed to world evangelism. We are to preach to all men, whether they want to hear the message of Christ or not, for all men need him.

When he was the head of an organization called International Christian Leadership, Dr. Richard Halverson addressed a group of men in Germany. After the session, he had a question time and one of the men asked, “You have been talking to men who are members of a church, encouraging them to work, but what do you say to a man who is a communist, who doesn’t believe in God, who has no interest in the church, who thinks Christ is all tommy-rot?”

Dr. Halverson quickly replied, “There is no place on earth where man doesn’t have an empty heart if he doesn’t know God, so begin with the empty heart; the life that is unfulfilled and unsatisfied is longing and yearning to find rest.”

There are millions of people in the United States, not to mention the rest of the world, who have never really heard the gospel.

Gertrude Bahanna, a woman who was wrapped up in every kind of immorality and who longed to have the inner yearnings of her heart satisfied, filled the emptiness of her life with sex, alcohol, dope and vice, but found no satisfaction. She lived for 50 years in the U.S.A. and never once heard the gospel. At age 50 she heard and God saved her. Today her life is transformed by the power of Christ.

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” The Christian will never be an effective witness for Christ until he is convinced that he has been sent into this world by God to be a testimony to it. A man sent of God has all the credentials he needs to bring the good news of Christ to the world, while a man with a fine education, good personality, and exceptional ability to speak, but without the assurance that he has been sent of God, will never be an effective witness for Christ.

John Knox, the great Scottish Reformer, was a man sent by God to Scotland to free that great nation from the death grip of the Roman Catholic Church. His one passion in life was to see the nation won for Christ. He prayed to God, “Give me Scotland for Christ or I die!” And God, through one man, brought Scotland to its knees before Christ.

Our message is one of good news, and we must somehow get this across to all men. It is estimated that there are 81 million evangelical Christians in the world today. Of course, they are in various states of knowledge and belief, but just suppose that 81 million Christians got on the ball and began to do what God has in mind for them, namely the evangelization of the world. In the first century the world was turned upside down by just a few Christians. Today the potential is great to see the evangelization of the world again. What is the problem? Men are not obedient. They are not making themselves available to God to be used as he sees fit in their lives. We must mobilize and train laymen to be effective witnesses for Christ.

THE UNIVERSAL OFFER OF SALVATION REJECTED — Romans 10:16-21

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report [message of faith]?” Paul quotes from Isaiah 53:1 to show that it was prophesied that the Jews would reject the good news of Christ.

The universal offer of the gospel is rejected by many because they do not want to be saved; they love darkness rather than light. This does not relieve our responsibility to preach the gospel to every creature. The Christian must be faithful to proclaim the good news whether anyone wants it or not. Someday we will have to give an account of our faithfulness.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God [Christ].” Genuine faith comes from hearing a message about Christ, and that message comes only from the Word of God. Saving faith comes from heeding saving doctrine, so we must stress teaching right doctrine. This verse also tells us that the way to get a strengthened faith is to know and apply the Word of God to life.

Again, it should be pointed out that God does not save anyone until that person hears the good news of Christ. God has ordained that it is the Christian’s responsibility to get the gospel to every creature.

D. L. Moody tells the story of how he pleaded with God for more faith. He pleaded and pleaded until he was at the point of despair, for his faith was not increasing. Then one day he read Romans 10:17, and from that day he began to read his Bible with seriousness of purpose in order to master it. He said that his faith continued to grow as he permitted the Word of God to grow in him.

“But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” The Jew is responsible for his rejection of Christ. Paul quotes Psalm 19:4, which speaks of the physical creation, and applies it to the opportunity God gave the Jews to hear the gospel. The Jews cannot say that they never heard the good news, for probably every Jew in the first century heard about Jesus Christ and the salvation that could be found in him. But they rejected the good news.

“But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.” Israel had a full knowledge of the good news of Christ, but they willfully rejected it. Actually, all rejection of Jesus Christ is willful, and God holds a person responsible for his unbelief.

It was predicted in the Old Testament that Gentiles would respond to the good news of Christ, and this would provoke the nation of Israel to jealousy and make their rejection of Christ even more bitter.

“But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” God, in his patience and longsuffering, is waiting for Israel to repent and turn to Christ. The gracious offer of salvation is still open to them. This makes their rejection even more hideous in light of God’s mercy.

How many folks today are just like the Jews! They know the good news of Christ and cannot plead ignorance, but refuse to accept Christ because of pride and love for sin and self.

CONCLUSION

Suppose that the whole world came down with some kind of terminal cancer, and it was just a matter of time before all would die. There was no hope for anyone, but through some great scientific discovery you uncovered a vaccine that could cure this disease. You hold in your hand the only hope for the world. Would you withhold it? Of course not. As a humanitarian, you would immediately begin to administer the vaccine to all so they could live. The good news of Christ is the only hope for the world and only we Christians possess it. If we do not take the gospel to men, they will die spiritually and we will be doing a great injustice to humanity. God can save no one until he first hears the gospel, and the spreading of the good news is our responsibility alone.

What is the greatest thing that ever happened to you? Your salvation in Christ. Then what is the greatest thing you can do for another human being? Help him to find Christ too!

God expects the Christian to go back into the world, back into the place where he lives, into the shop where he works, back into his local neighborhood, and take the good news to the world. God is waiting for Christians to respond in obedience to the spreading of the gospel, and when they do, he will begin to save some folks.

If we really believe that the gospel is to be universally offered to all, then we will begin to speak the gospel to all with whom we come in contact. Are you willing to say, "Here I am, Lord, use me to reach the world"?