

The Golden Chain Of Conversion

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[0:00] Amen. Open your Bibles up to Romans chapter 10.

! Romans chapter 10 this morning. If you're using one of the pew Bibles, just open up to page 946.! Otherwise, find Romans chapter 10 in your Bibles. I want to thank Phil for standing in for Justin. Justin and Leslie are out of town this week. And so I'm grateful not only to have Justin and Leslie, but that they have talented friends that can come and sub in for them. So I'm grateful. Thanks, Phil. Is Phil hiding over there?

Oh, he's going to eventually make his way around and show up. Okay, but we're grateful for Phil. All right, you guys, if you've turned there to Romans chapter 10, I want to ask you guys to stand as we begin in verse 14 and simply read down to verse 15.

The Apostle Paul says, 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?

[1:11] 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. Father, we thank you that we have the good news.

That we don't have to guess. We don't have to wonder whether or not there is good news to be heard and received and rejoiced in and proclaimed, but we know it. And we ask you this morning to motivate us not only to believe, but also to proclaim.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. You know, as we've been walking through Romans now for almost two years, we have come across a lot of passages that are wonderful to memorize or to quote, to put on a sign.

So many great passages throughout the book of Romans that we cherish and that we love.

Beginning all the way back in chapter 1, for instance, verse 16 of chapter 1 where Paul says, That he is not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation.

That's a wonderful, powerful verse to memorize. In almost every chapter you can find verses that you want sort of emblazoned upon your heart.

[2:27] In fact, we saw some of those last week as we were journeying through chapter 10. Paul says, for instance, in verse 9, If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Or verse 13, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So there are, in chapter 10, a lot of these verses that we have, some of you have memorized in the past or that I would encourage you to memorize for the future, that are great passages that give us insight, that remind us of the gospel, that we've come together to celebrate and we go out to preach and proclaim to other people.

And this morning's passage is no different. It's such a wonderful passage, such a great passage, to remind us of the importance of actually going and telling others about the gospel of Christ.

In fact, everything that Paul says in these two verses that we're looking at this morning is really in response to the great statement that he made at the end of the passage last week that I just quoted, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

That word calls rings in Paul's minds and it continues as he goes, as he continues to write, as he asks the question though, but how are people going to call on him if they've never, how are they going to call on him if they've never believed in him?

[3:50] How can that happen? In fact, Paul's going to issue a series of questions in verses 14 and 15 that are linked together like a chain from calling to believing, to hearing, to preaching, to being sent.

Five links in this chain of questions that he asks about the importance of not only believing the gospel, but taking the gospel to others. This is not the first time though that we've seen one of these sort of chains that Paul puts together in the book of Romans.

The most famous one, the most well-known one, another one of those quotable verses is found in chapter 8. If you recall in chapter 8 verse 29, Paul begins to list what we often call the golden chain of redemption or the golden chain of salvation.

Golden because it's so precious because the words are such a treasure to us and a chain because one leads into the other from predestination to calling to justification to glorification.

Paul links all these activities of God in all that God does to save us, to rescue us and redeem us and he links them together and shows us how one leads to the other and he's doing something very similar in this morning's passage except that in this passage he's not focusing upon God's work in saving people.

[5:12] He's now focusing on but what do we do in the process of salvation? How do we respond to that? And how does God use us, for instance, so that he might call people to himself?

How does God use us so that people would believe and therefore be justified? What is our role in that process? On either side of it, whether we're the person being saved or we're the person taking the gospel message out to others so that they might be saved, what is our role?

And he's going to help us to understand that by each link in this chain as we look at them this morning. I said there are five of them. They begin with calling. They end with being sent.

And I want us to start at the end. I want us to go in the order in which these things actually happen so that we can follow along and track along and understand the importance of each one of these steps as we think about what it means not only to believe in Christ but also to proclaim the message of Christ to the world.

So I just want us to start at the bottom, at the very end, with the last, with being sent and then we will work our way all the way up to calling upon the Lord. So notice toward the end in verse 15, he references those who are sent.

[6:28] How are they to preach unless they are sent? And then he quotes from the Old Testament from Isaiah 52 verse 7 to talk about those who are sent. He says, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

So that's his celebration of those who actually go out to preach. Of those who are in fact sent with the message into the world to take it out and proclaim it to others.

How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news. And in the original context, when Isaiah issued that proclamation about the beauty of the feet of those who proclaim good news, Isaiah was talking about a messenger running through the hills, running across the hills back to Jerusalem to proclaim the good news that God is once again coming to redeem and rescue His people out of their bondage that they are now once again in.

And He's going to come and rescue them. He's going to bring life and salvation back to the people of Israel. And He sends a messenger, a herald ahead of time to announce to them, God is about to save and rescue you.

And Isaiah says that the feet of that messenger are beautiful feet. Now you all know how I feel about feet. This is not the first time in a sermon that I've mentioned feet.

[7:46] I find feet to be, quite frankly, disgusting. They're just gross. And I think maybe, maybe that's why Isaiah and Paul go to the feet because they know that feet are gross too.

They were more aware of it in the ancient world than we are today. I mean, look around you. Every guy in here has their feet completely covered. Now some of the ladies are wearing sandals because you take time to try to decorate your feet to cover up what's actually really there and that is feet and all feet are gross.

But women spend time trying to decorate them, trying to make them look nice. Men generally don't do that. We just go with what we've got. So we just cover them up to save everybody else the trouble. But they didn't do that in the ancient world.

They wore sandals. So feet were visible all the time. And because they walked everywhere, many times along dusty, rocky roads, along dirty streets, their feet were frequently dirty.

That's why it's such a big deal in the upper room when Jesus is willing to stoop down and wash His disciples' feet. That was something that only the lowliest of servants was to do.

[8:50] Why? Because it's gross. It's just gross to do that. And the disciples were shocked and taken aback that Jesus would even be willing to touch their feet, much less to wash their feet.

Feet are, they're gross. And yet, Isaiah and Paul say, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news.

The gospel message takes that which is outwardly ugly and it turns it into something beautiful that God begins to use to accomplish His purposes. So there are many times when we will think to ourselves, I can't go out and tell anybody the gospel.

I'll mess it up. I'm not any good at that. We're like Moses. We comply. I can't speak God. I'm not going to be able to do this. I'll get tongue-tied. I won't remember the right answers. I won't know what to say. And really what we're saying is I don't think that I've got the goods to actually take care of it.

My ability to tell others about the gospel is lacking. I'm ugly in my presentation. I can't handle it. And yet, Paul and Isaiah are saying, no.

[9:55] Those who proclaim the gospel by definition are automatically doing something that makes them attractive. They're doing something that is worthwhile and valuable so that beautiful are the feet of those who race across the mountaintops to proclaim the good news of salvation to people.

And we need to be committed to that. We need to be, we need to embrace that that is our job. That is our mission in life is to take the gospel out to people.

Now I have heard it said many times and I think on one level this is helpful but on another level it can be misleading. I've heard it said that everybody in the church in regards to this sending has one of two jobs.

Either you are one of those sent out or you are one who does the sending. So the idea being that not everybody is going to be sent out to proclaim the gospel but everybody is to participate either by going out and being sent or by being a sender and supporting those who go out.

Now I think that's applicable if we're only talking about going sort of into international missions or some sort of hard missions like in the inner city where we actually really literally send people out away from us away from our sort of local mission here in the community.

[11:17] We do send certain people out. We send people into other parts of the world. We send people into other places around us in our region places that we maybe can't go to.

We send others who can that God calls to do those things. So in that sense yes, if we are limiting what we mean by the preaching of the gospel to those kinds of missionary projects then it is true. Everybody has to be involved either by being sent and going or by supporting those who are in fact sent. So I mentioned earlier in our announcements the trip to Guatemala and you might think I can't do that.

I can't go to that either because I've got my kids or my health is not good enough there's no way that I could actually participate and go. That's fine. You can support those who go financially.

You can give them \$5, \$10, \$100 to help with the cost of the trip or you can simply support them with prayer and prepare the way as they go begin praying for that trip and everybody that will be on that trip.

[12:17] So it is true and we need to embrace the reality that all of us either need to be sent out to do missions more broadly in the world or we need to be actively involved in the sending of those out.

I think that's true. But I think sometimes when we hear that we use that as an excuse to opt out of and to check out of all missionary efforts.

But the reality is that all of us are called and commanded to go and make disciples. When Jesus issued the Great Commission at the end of the Gospel of Matthew when He said go and make disciples that wasn't just for those men who had gathered there at that mountain in Galilee.

It wasn't a message that they were only to hear. It wasn't a command that they were only to obey.

They were to pass on that command. That's why it's recorded in the Gospel of Matthew for us to read. They were to pass on that command so that every generation would take it upon themselves to go and to actually make disciples so that every disciple of Jesus every follower of Christ has set before them the task of going out and making more disciples.

That does not mean that we're all going to go far. It doesn't mean that we're all going to do ministries that sound exciting to anyone else. But we are all in that sense missionaries.

[13:36] You are a missionary to the people next door if they do not know Christ. You are a missionary to your co-worker if they don't know Christ or to your family member and to your children who don't come into this world already knowing Jesus.

We're all missionaries. We're all disciple makers. And so we are all among those who are in fact sent out to proclaim the Gospel.

You may not be sent far but you have been sent to take the Gospel to people. And of course I'm making a lot of assumptions here and I'm getting ahead of myself as we are going to walk through this chain because I keep saying you're sent out to proclaim.

You're sent out to preach the Gospel. But that's assuming the next link in the chain because he says how are they going to believe without someone preaching to them?

Verse 14. And then how are they to preach unless they are sent? So those who are sent out we are sent out with a very specific task. We are sent out to preach.

[14:39] That's what we're supposed to do. That's what we are supposed to be about. We are people who proclaim good news. Of course there are a lot of other good things that we should do as Christians living in the world.

There are plenty of good things that we ought to busy ourselves about. So that for instance James says in his one letter that he wrote he says in James chapter 1 that religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this.

To visit orphans and widows in their affliction to keep oneself unstained from the world. So James recognizes the other apostles recognize that there are good deeds that we should be performing in the world as we go out.

Taking care of orphans and widows. Taking care of those who are less fortunate than ourselves. We call these things social ministries or some people refer to them as social justice and we should care about that.

It should matter to us. We should be engaged in the social issues of our day. So yesterday there were a few of us who went down into Houston to an abortion clinic to stand outside and try to hand out tracts to ladies as they walked in to try to convince them not to go in there into that place and do that.

[15:52] We're there engaging in that particular issue. That's what we're trying to do. We care about that issue. We should care about racial injustices that are in the world around us. that seem to be inflamed all the time in the last few years.

That should matter to us. That should bother us and we should be engaged in making right the things that are wrong in the world. We should be engaged in taking care of those who need to be taken care of.

That's important. But that's not what Paul is talking about here and that's not our primary mission so that when we do go to another country or when we do send someone to another country to do mission work somewhere it's often necessary in certain parts of the world for missionaries to be engaged in a lot of social work.

There is a lot of poverty to be addressed and hunger to be addressed. If you come into town planning to preach the gospel and everyone is starving to death you need to feed them so that you can then preach the gospel to them.

And so there are going to be times when it's necessary for us to do these things before we can even get to the gospel. That's the reality. But what we never want to miss is the fact that our primary purpose in going places whether it's far away or near our primary purpose is that we might preach.

[17:12] We've come with a message. We've come to proclaim something not just do something with our hands. Our hands give validity to the things that we say but our hands don't preach the gospel.

You all have heard people say often times you preach the gospel with words and I'll do it with my life or with my deeds. That actually does not work because you can't preach with deeds.

It sounds wonderful it looks good on a postcard or a bumper sticker but it doesn't actually work. You don't tell anybody anything other than the fact that you're a nice person when you do good in the world.

Doing good in the world is to open a doorway so that you can say something. We have to be preachers we have to be proclaimers of the gospel message and the word preacher here doesn't just mean what I'm doing up here on the stage.

We can't exempt ourselves because we say well I don't have the gift of preaching or I'm not cold to do that. This is a more broad category than what I do when I stand up here.

[18:17] This is not the systematic teaching and expositing of the scriptures that Paul is talking about. This is the simple most of the time one on one sharing of the gospel message.

And it is in fact the gospel that we are to be out proclaiming and preaching. We need to never forget that the content of our message is of utmost importance. So that Isaiah speaks of the good news which we know means gospel.

But what he really says is we should be he uses a verb form here that means basically to proclaim good news or to announce good news.

It's a combination of two words. One word that means to bring a message. In fact it's related to the word for angel a messenger. And then this verb that means to proclaim a message has the word good put in front of it.

So we are preachers of good or proclaimers of good. That's the verb. But then he follows it up with a word that's not necessary to make his point. Paul does in the way that he renders this. He actually follows it up with another word for good.

[19 : 21] The good things. Which is why some translations say we are to proclaim good news of good tidings or something along those lines because they're trying to show that there are two words in here that indicate something good.

And that good is the message itself. Paul is emphasizing that we have a specific message to proclaim. In fact you can look down to verse 17 where he refers to this again.

He says that faith comes from hearing and hearing through what he calls the word of Christ or the word about Christ. So we have a message of good news that is centered upon Christ.

And this particular phrase in verse 17 is somewhat jarring. It stands out. You won't find this particular phrase anywhere else in the New Testament. The word of Christ.

We expect something like word of God. That's found much more frequently in both the Old and New Testament and the specific Greek words that we find here. We find word of God much more often.

[20 : 24] And that's what you might expect Paul to say. Faith comes from hearing. Hearing from the word of God. That's so normal. That's what you would expect so much that there were actually some scribes who later on changed the word of Christ to of God because of Christ just sounded strange to them.

So that you'll find in some translations that are based off those manuscripts where they changed it. Some translations today even have the word of God. But Paul originally wrote the word of Christ because he wants us to see and understand that we have a very specific message that is good news that is centered on a specific person Jesus Christ himself.

And we need to be really clear about that message that we're out there to proclaim. Which is why on Wednesday nights in our Wednesday night Bible study that we've been doing on evangelism we took three weeks just to go over and make sure that we all understood what we meant by gospel what we meant by good news.

Walking through each basic truth of the gospel message that God is the creator and made all things for his own glory that we as his creation are made for his glory yet we have failed to live for his glory because we have sinned.

That God is a just and holy God who will in fact punish all sinners so that we ourselves deserve to be punished for our sin and yet God loves sinners and because he loves sinners he sent Christ to die in our place and now he commands us to repent and believe in the work of Christ in the message of the gospel so that we might be saved.

[22 : 02] That's the basic gospel message wrapped up into a nutshell. That's what Paul means when he speaks of the good news or of the word of Christ. He means that message about redemption for sinners through the blood of Jesus and that's what we're sent out to do.

We're not sent out to do anything greater than that. There will be other things that we surround our proclamation of the good news with but none of those things are the reason that we are sent out. Sent out very simply to tell other people the good news about Jesus Christ. That's what we are to do and we do that with a goal in mind. We do that with a goal that people would hear the message that people would be exposed to the message that's the next link in the chain.

They can't hear unless someone comes to preach to them. They can't believe unless they hear the message and so we do want to make sure that we communicate this message in ways that are clear to people.

We need to make sure that people can understand what we're saying which is why it's not enough when you're going to share the gospel with people just to run through the gospel that I just summed up really quickly.

[23:17] It's not usually enough just to give them that gospel summary and walk away. You have to make sure that they actually hear. You have to communicate it in a way that they can actually remember that makes sense to them that they can connect to and so you have to be careful and you have to be consistent and you have to be committed to continually taking the gospel to people because rarely are you going to have an opportunity unless you like to just go out on the street and share the gospel with strangers or do some sort of prison ministry where you sit down and people have to sit and listen to you walk through a gospel presentation.

Rarely are you going to have a chance to just walk through all those points of the gospel with someone. It's going to happen with your friends and your relatives and your neighbors as you actually are involved in their lives as you engage with them and you care about them and over time you begin to share more and more of what we believe about what Christ has come to do until finally one day you're able to really sort of sum it up for them and then say now trust in Christ believe in this message.

You have to be able to engage and enter into people's lives so that they might hear what you have to say. Always with the goal that they'll respond to it.

That's where Paul begins. He begins with people's response in this chain. We send the people who are sent which is all of us we preach the gospel we preach it in such a way that they might hear but we're doing all that so that they might believe and therefore call upon the Lord and therefore as verse 13 says be saved.

what does it mean though for someone to believe? They hear the message and we want them to respond by believing. What do we mean when we say that?

[25:07] I think that's a crucial question because when Paul says things like you need to believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead we can sometimes be confused over exactly what God is requiring people to do.

What God is requiring people to do is not to simply agree with the truths that we proclaim when we preach the gospel. I think that's an error that a lot of people make.

They think well so long as I can convince people so long as I can I can argue people into agreeing with the message that I'm bringing to them then I've won them then they're now a Christian and that's not the case at all.

James is able to speak of the demons the demons who know and believe that God is real that he exists they know the truths that we proclaim they agree that those things are true they devote themselves to denying those truths and convincing others that they're false but they know the truth they acknowledge they know that the gospel is the true message about Christ they know that and yet their knowledge of that doesn't help them in any way so that knowledge by itself is insufficient to save someone you can clearly communicate the gospel they can nod their head the entire time they can agree with everything that you've said but at that point you don't say aha it's done and over I need to walk away from this I think that's probably most tempting when it comes to our kids we want to make sure that our kids understand the gospel and so we regularly teach it to them we make sure they go to Sunday school we make sure they're here so they hear the preaching we ask them questions some of you even use catechisms to teach your kids and you do all these different things to try to make sure that they understand the gospel and that's all necessary and important but that's not the goal the goal is not to train up little theologians who only agree with the truths that we've taught them that's never the goal the goal is that they would believe in such a way that they would call upon the Lord there is an unbreakable link between genuine true saving faith that actually results in salvation and calling on the Lord we talked about this a little bit last week because we saw that Paul uses this calling language throughout the paragraph that we were considering last week so look at verse 9

Paul uses a term similar to calling if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord that's another way to talk about calling out to him again you see the confession language in verse 10 with the mouth one confesses and is saved and then in verse 12 God bestows his riches on all who call upon him and of course verse 13 he saves everyone who calls on his name so this is important language we talked about it a little bit last week we talked about the fact that you don't have genuine true saving faith apart from those who confess Christ who call out to him but now Paul is making the link between those two things even clearer as he says that you cannot call on one in whom you have not believed they are essentially linked together that's why I'm calling this the chain of conversion it shows us everything that must happen in order for a person to actually be saved

how do we work back to the point to where someone calls on the Lord and is saved we proclaim the gospel to them in such a way that they not only hear and understand the message but they have a kind of faith that naturally that automatically cries out to him for salvation there's nothing that we do with our mouths in a literal oral way that people can hear that results in our salvation that's not the point the point is that to believe from the heart as Paul talks about to believe from the heart is to believe in such a way that we automatically cry out to him to rescue us and redeem us and save us this is not something that Paul invents this is an idea that you find throughout the scriptures in fact you can find it most frequently probably in the book of Psalms listen to just

[29:41] I just want you to listen to just a handful these are just a few of the samples from the book of Psalms that speak of calling or crying out to God Psalm 18 verse 3 I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised and I am saved from my enemies Psalm 55 verse 16 I call to God and the Lord will save me over and over we see this calling language Psalm 86 we see it several times be gracious to me O Lord for to you I cry is what the ESV says it's the word call to you I call all the day gladden the soul of your servant for to you O Lord I lift up my soul for you O Lord are good and forgiving abounding and steadfast love to all who call upon you he says give ear O Lord to my prayer listen to my plea for grace in the day of my trouble I call upon you and you answer me over and over I call I cry out to you and you save your good you abound in love toward those who call out to you one more example

Psalm 145 18 the Lord is near to all who call on him to all who call on him in truth it is necessary that we believe but believing is more than agreeing believing is a full heartfelt commitment and dependence upon God in such a way that we simply cry out to him to save us redeem us and rescue us I have a bad habit of just tuning everything out when I'm focused on something just a really bad habit whether I'm reading and studying in my office at home that's one of the things that happens when your office is at home I have learned over the last few years when your office is at home you're never just working and you're never just not working things just kind of get blended together sometimes and so there are times when I'm working probably when I shouldn't be working but I'm working studying and reading in my office and the kids are they want my attention they're calling for me and yet I just sort of tune it out or sometimes

I'm working on some sort of project around the house and the kids might come in and say hey dad and ask me a question and I might say yeah yeah okay and then later on they're doing something I say what are you doing and they say I asked you if I could do it and you said yeah and they're usually right in telling the truth but I have no memory of that whatsoever but there's all the difference in the world when suddenly one of them is hurt no matter what I'm doing focused on anything if I hear a particular kind of cry if I hear a particular kind of call there is something I guess built into you once you have a kid it's just programmed into you suddenly you drop what you're doing and you look around like suddenly you've been awakened from a sleep and you know something's wrong somebody needs your help that's the kind of cry that's the kind of call that comes out to those who recognize that they are a needy sinner in desperate need of God to forgive them and cover them with the blood of Christ and that's what Paul means when he says that we have to call not just agree but call and the heart that really believes in a biblical way in the truth of the gospel calls out to him for rescue deliverance and salvation and we have the joy and the privilege of being able to show people who are in the depths and drowning and headed for disaster that there is one that they can call to and be rescued from their trouble what a great privilege for us it's not a burden for you to sense and feel a need to go and talk to your neighbor and try to share the gospel with them it's a great privilege it's not a burden for us to feel that we need to have the conversation with a relative or a co-worker it's a great privilege for us to go out and proclaim the message and call people to faith in Jesus that is a great privilege for us we just need to embrace it as a privilege and be more committed to saying no matter what it might look like when I do this no matter how

I might stumble and fall and muddle my words up and feel like I've done a terrible job the scripture says how beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news and so I will dedicate myself to that task that the Lord has given to me that's that's our mission in the world and in the community in which we live that is our mission all the time and God gives an ironclad promise he doesn't just say that we need to call he promises everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved so that you might be among those to whom people have been sent and people have proclaimed they have they have explained the gospel to you many times you have heard the gospel you agree with the gospel but perhaps you've

never called out to him for salvation scriptures are clear everyone who calls will be saved let's pray
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