

Overcoming the Angst

Lent: Mission

Romans 10:10-15

02/25/25

Introduction

Tim. Pastor. **Romans 10:9-15** (Lent Guide - p24). **PRAY**

When I was a senior in high school, my classmates and I decided to head down to Orlando for Spring Break.

Going to check out Disney World, Universal Studios, all of that. And the plan was to leave on Saturday morning and come back Thursday.

But a few of us played on the school's basketball team and we had a game that Saturday. So our plan was to drive down together after the game. We were going to leave at like 6pm and Orlando was supposed to be about a 7 hour drive or so (or when you're in high school 6 hour drive), so we'd get down there around 1am. Which right now in my 30s it sounds awful, but when you're in high school it's like...awesome.

And so we played the game, hit the road. And I can't tell you much about this trip except that it was the slowest drive to anywhere I have ever experienced.

- I remember even getting out of our town was difficult because of all of this random construction and detours.
- And then I-95 S, if you're not aware, is always terrible. Constantly going from 2 lanes to 1 lane for construction or accidents.
- There were multiple designated police traffic stops outside of Jacksonville.
- It was just one thing after another after another. Barrier after barrier after barrier.

To where at multiple points we all asked – “Do we just turn around and give up?” And what was supposed to take 6 hours, maybe 7...ended up taking us just shy of 12.

Have you ever had one of these experiences? Where you set out to do something – drive somewhere, accomplish a goal, start something new and every possible barrier in the world pops up?

That is a perfect picture of what we're talking about today in regards to mission...

We're spending this season of Lent as a church talking about the spiritual practice of **mission**, which we defined as **demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel to people who don't yet know Jesus.**

And last week we laid a foundation for how we grow to become missional people. Through truth, community, and practice, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we slowly over time are formed into people who join the mission of God to take the gospel to the world.

But what I want to spend our time addressing today is the barriers to that mission.

- When we begin to step into mission, what are the roadblocks that are going to come up, the hurdles that are going to tempt us to shrink back and give up.
- Or even better yet, for those of us who are not engaged at all in the mission of God to take the gospel to those around us, what are some of the reasons why. What are the barriers that are keeping us from even beginning to engage in this call of God on our lives?

So this morning, I want to look together at **Romans 10**, and I want to both highlight these barriers, and then from the text give us some ways to get through them.

Call, Believe, Preach, Send

Romans 10:9-13

9 Because, 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. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

So Paul starts in these verses by referring back to an argument that he’s been making for the first part of Romans and that is – the gospel of Jesus is available to both all people – Both Jew and Greek, aka everybody. Everyone, as he outlined so well in chapters 1-3, is equally under the curse and weight of sin AND everyone is equally able to be saved by Jesus.

And he explains how this salvation comes about – through belief and confession – that Jesus is Lord and Jesus has risen from the grave.

We are saved through a core level (that’s what he means by heart – the operating system within us) has surrendered to the reality of who Christ is and what He has done for us.

That’s what it means to be a Christian – we are surrendered with our whole selves to Jesus as both Savior and Lord.

And then he continues – ok if salvation comes through calling on the name of the Lord, that leads to, for Paul, some really important rhetorical questions...

14 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? 15 And 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!”

Look at these questions Paul asks. If salvation comes through calling on Jesus...

- **How can they call on Jesus for salvation, if they don’t believe in Him?**
- **How can they believe in Jesus, if they haven’t heard about Jesus?**
- **How can they hear about Jesus, without someone preaching?**

Now, a quick clarification here on that word preaching...

- When the biblical authors use that word, they don’t necessarily mean “stand up on a Sunday and give a message.”
 - That, in the NT, is more often referred to actually as “teaching”.
 - It’s one of the roles within the church Paul reserves for qualified men who serve as pastors – “able to teach”.
 - It’s what the early church devoted themselves to, Acts 2:42 – “the apostles teaching.”
- When Paul says “preaching” here, he means its most simplest definition which is simply to “declare” or “announce”.
 - To inform someone of something that they aren’t yet aware of.
 - To be a herald or bringer of good news.

So when Paul says – “how can they hear without someone preaching?”, this is not a rallying cry to raise up more pastors who can teach God’s Word from the pulpit, rather it’s an emphasis on the call on the lives of all believers.

Preaching (announcing the good news of Jesus to everyone everywhere) is something every follower of Jesus is called to do throughout their life.

So Paul says “how can someone hear about Jesus, and then believe in him and call on him and be saved... unless someone announces or tells or explains the message of Jesus to them?”

And then the final question – **How can that happen, unless someone is sent to do that?**

So what is Paul addressing here? **The mission of all followers of Jesus.**

That we have been sent by our authority, King Jesus, to go into our various spheres of life and influence, our varying friend groups and workplaces and families, and even sometimes to other places in the world altogether – and declare the good news of Christ to those who don’t yet know or believe.

To declare to them the good news of Jesus such that they would hear, believe, and call out for salvation.

That is what we mean when we say “joining the mission of God.”

Leveraging all of our lives to demonstrate and proclaim the gospel to those who don’t yet know Jesus.

Barriers

Now, that is an awesome and beautiful and weighty reality Paul lays out for us.

For generations and generations of followers of Jesus, passages like this one have been seen as a rallying cry, as marching orders to participate in God’s mission.

But I think what previous generations heard as a rallying cry, some of us today may hear a little differently...

- When we think about the weightiness of “how can they hear and believe unless we proclaim?”, many of us feel a good bit of *reluctance or hesitation*.
- Maybe others of us have a good bit of *anxiety or worry* begin to rise up within us.
- Maybe even still others of us have some feelings of *shame or guilt* because we know how far our lives are from this being a regular practice.

We hear – “Go and proclaim the gospel!” and are hit with this overwhelming sense of **angst**.

I mean, hopefully we can be honest about this: when you heard that our practice for this year was mission, I would guess that at least some of you were like “oh...that. Can’t we do prayer again? What about sabbath? I know, compromise – how about fasting?”

Mission just doesn’t feel like that compelling or exciting of an idea to some of us.

There’s this disconnect, or this angst gap – between what we see so clearly in the Scriptures, both the commands and the examples of the early church and what we do in our lives, what we believe in our hearts, and what we even desire to step into.

And that is due to a few reasons... and that is really where I want to spend the rest of our time this morning. Stay with me, because this might feel like a lot, but I want to help name some things going on in your heart when you're reluctant to participate in the mission of God.

There are a few specific barriers that arise when we think about or try to step into the mission of God – demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel to those who don't yet know Jesus:

1. The Barrier of this Cultural Moment

The culture you live in is not naturally going to default you to being a gospel-sharer. Now, we say "our culture", "the culture" a lot. Let me show you what we mean when we say "our culture".

• Postmodern society.

- A postmodern society is one where each person or group of people defines their "own truth" – their own ethics, their own values, and really, their own reality. But also one where none of those truths, ethics, values, or realities are inherently any more valid than any others.
- So there is a deep suspicion, if not distaste for anyone who would claim absolute truth.

• Age of authenticity.

- That means ultimate meaning and value is found, not out here in some deity or in the greater world or family responsibilities, but meaning comes from within yourself.
- Self-discovery and self-expression become the highest goal, which means no one and nothing can, or should, tell you what to do including surrender to any deity or God.
- **Charles Taylor – "I mean the understanding of life which emerges with the Romantic expressivism of the late-eighteenth century, that each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority."**

• Secularism and disenchantment.

- We've talked about this a lot – "having no spiritual belief" is now more popular than having spiritual belief in any sort of deity or spiritual world.
- The majority of our culture no longer thinks the spiritual realm is real or meaningful.
- You can go about your life in a semi-controllable way devoid of anything supernatural or transcendent.
- As one pastor says there's no need to pray for daily bread when you can just door dash for a loaf. No need to pray for healing, we can go see a doctor and take medicine. A non-transcendent way of life.

• Moralistic therapeutic deism.

- Which is a really fancy way of saying the low-level belief of those who would say "I believe in God" is quite simply – "If God exists, he exists to make me happy if I'm good."
- As long as I'm a good person, God will bless me with a life that is always better, a career that is always advancing, and a bank account that is always growing.

• Globalization and pluralism.

- We have access to the world at our fingertips. The other side of the globe is a 12-hour plane ride away. And the beliefs of the other side of the globe is 12 seconds away.
- So we are all exposed to so many different viewpoints and opinions and thoughts about the after-life and thoughts about the current life. So many different beliefs on how to live.

And all of that – when you mix it all up – leads to us believing at either a conscious or subconscious level that we should *privatize our faith*.

This is what it looks like in your life:

- You have an agnostic co-worker, or a Buddhist neighbor, or a Muslim colleague or a “spiritual but not religious” friend.
- And the *second* you even consider talking with them about Jesus...all of these doubts start popping in your head that sound like this:
 - “Oh, who am I to think that my truth is any truer than theirs?” (postmodernism)
 - “They seem really happy and it seems like their belief system is working for them.” (age of authenticity)
 - “They’re probably going to think I’m stupid that I would think some guy 2,000 years ago could rise from the dead.” (Secularism + Disenchantment)
 - “God’s not going to punish them if they don’t believe in Jesus, as long as they’re really sincere about their attempts at faith, after all he just wants us all to be happy.” (moralistic therapeutic deism)
 - “Who am I to consider that my belief system is any more valid than theirs? I’m probably just a Christian because of where and when I was born.” (globalism + pluralism)

Even if we know, *deep down*, believing and calling on Jesus is the only way to be saved – we don’t want to be arrogant or self-righteous or come across as pushy.

That’s the discipleship power of our cultural moment working against you sharing the gospel – Getting us to think “**Well this whole Jesus thing is true for me, but that doesn’t mean it’s true for them.**”

This is why, as I shared a few weeks ago, a recent study by the Barna group found that while nearly all Christians agree that part of their following of Jesus means “being a witness about Him,” nearly half of Christians believe that it is wrong to share your beliefs with someone in the hopes that one day that person will share them.

So even though most Christians would say – “I’m supposed to share my faith”, nearly half would also say that it is morally wrong to share their faith with someone else if the goal is to change the other person’s mind. Not that they’d rather not do it because it’s uncomfortable, but that it is morally wrong or evil. We’re doing what is right by remaining silent about it.

So here’s what I would argue is happening there – There is a *conviction* – that we should share our faith with other people – that is colliding with a *worldview* – that we are good, Western, relativistic, postmodern, pluralistic people.

And the worldview is winning out, at least for around half of Christians.

2. The Barrier of the Enemy

Not only is our cultural moment working against us living on mission, so are the spiritual forces of evil.

This is how it’s talked about in **2 Cor 4:3-4 – And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

Paul says there is a way the enemy of God, the Devil, is working that blinds the minds of unbelievers and derail and disrupt the proclamation of the gospel.

So that friend of yours who you’ve been sharing the gospel with for years. You’ve been faithful to love them, serve them, demonstrate and proclaim the gospel to them and they would acknowledge – “yep, that all makes sense” – but they still won’t surrender to Jesus.

That’s this barrier. The barrier of the enemy.

And so that shrinks us back from sharing our faith because “we tried that and it just didn’t seem to work.” Or “well they just don’t seem interested.” Or “It made things weird.”

So realizing our battle is not just an intellectual one, where we just need to say the right thing.

Or a relational one, where we just need to be the perfect loving friend.

But rather a spiritual one where the spiritual forces of good and evil are battling over the souls of humanity...

It can leave us not wanting to engage at all. It seems too hard. What can we do? It’s just discouraging.

So the broader culture is working against us. The enemy is working against us.

And in case you think it’s all “out there” ...unfortunately for us, we are also working against us.

3. The Barrier of the Self

Here’s what I mean...we have all of these internal resistances and hesitations to joining the mission of God for a whole variety of reasons.

- **For some of us, our love of this world is keeping us from the mission of God.**
 - We have no energy or time to leverage for joining God in building His kingdom, because we are way too busy building our own.
 - Our priorities are wrapped up in comfort, success, achievement, money, status – you name it.
 - *We are too busy proclaiming the excellencies of our career to proclaim the excellencies of Christ!*
 - And it keeps our eyes down, focused on the things of this world, not on the things of God.
 - And so you feel this weighty burden from the Scriptures – “how could I possibly find time to join God in His mission in the world?” but feel no weight burden to find time to work 60 hours every week. Or to find time to stream that show you’re watching with your spouse.
- **Ingrained sin patterns and addictions.**
 - Sin turns us inward on ourselves. It conditions our souls and shrinks them to be about us – our immediate gratification and pleasure – rather than on the glory of God.
 - It grinds us down with guilt and shame, making us ineffective in the kingdom of God.

And we could keep going...

- Our desperate need to be liked and approved of by everyone around us.
- Wounds left unhealed and forgiveness left withheld that keeps us from engaging in the mission of God.

The list goes on and on and on.

So as we begin to consider stepping into the mission of God, here’s all the things that start going off in our hearts and minds:

- I would engage with my neighbor, but I’m just really busy this week with this thing and that commitment.
- I would go to lunch with my coworker and ask him about spiritual things, but I’m just nervous it’d make it awkward and I’m new and I really want him to like me.
- I would share the gospel with my friend but I just don’t really care, not realizing the reason we don’t care is because our hearts are so caught up in 10 other sinful desires and affections.

Fighting Against the Barriers

So if those are the barriers – cultural moment, the enemy, the self. Or in other words – **the world, the flesh, the devil** – how do we begin to press into those. To not lose heart. To not turn the car around and just head back home and give up? How do we get off the proverbial sideline and into the game?

Look back at Romans 10 and let me show you this very briefly...

To fight the cultural barrier...

1. Remember the exclusivity of Jesus.

Look at what Paul says in **Romans 10:12-13** – **12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**

Not everyone who calls on “a” Lord. THE Lord. The one true God.

The belief that we must be “sent” to preach the gospel is driven by the fact that Jesus is Lord of all.

- He is the one true king. He is the one true God.
- The way of Jesus is not just “true for you.” It isn’t just “your truth.”

It is the truth. It’s not just subjectively true, it’s objectively true.

And God’s people have thought this and claimed this forever.

- **Psalm 96:4-5** – **For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.**
- **John 14:6** – **Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**
- **Acts 4:12** – **And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

A fair reading of the Scriptures and the claims of Jesus does not let you believe in multiple ways to God. Does not let you believe in multiple valid belief systems. There is only one God.

As one theologian **John Dickson** notes – **“The most basic doctrine in all of the Bible is the claim ‘there is only one God to whom all people owe their allegiance’...Promoting the gospel to the world is more than a rescue mission (though it is certainly that as well); it is a reality mission.”**

Proclaiming the gospel is not trying to win people to a belief system they can and should consider – **it’s declaring what is true.**

Now maybe you hear that and think to yourself, “okay but isn’t that kind of arrogant?”

- Isn’t it dangerous to say that our belief system is the one true belief system and that others aren’t true?
- Again, our culture has shaped us into being very uncomfortable with assertions like that.

But here’s where our culture is dead wrong – it is not arrogant to simply say that something is true.

- If I said to you, “Vi Liles is the mayor of Charlotte,” you wouldn’t respond to me by going “wow – what an arrogant statement for you to make. How brazen for you to just go around declaring that she is the mayor of Charlotte. You should have more humility.”
- No, because it’s not arrogant to say that something is true. Some people will tell you that it is, but it’s not.

GK Chesterton says it like this – **“What we suffer from today is humility in the wrong place. [...] A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. We are on the road to producing a race of men too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication table.”**

Now you can say true things in an arrogant way, but truth is not arrogant in and of itself.

- So let's be sensitive to how we are talking to people about Jesus.
- Let's be aware of the tone and the words we are using.
- Let's be humble and gentle in how we do it.
- Whenever possible, let's do it in ways that are culturally winsome and culturally appropriate.
- Yes and amen to all of that.

But let's not buy into the lie that we're doing what's noble by keeping our mouths shut. There's a world out there that needs to hear the good news of Jesus. They need to know that Jesus is king. He is the only way to be saved.

To fight the enemy...

2. Remember the power of Jesus.

I love the certainty of these verses.

- V9 – “You will be saved.”
- V10 – “believes and *is* justified Confesses and *is* saved.”
- V11 – “Will not be put to shame.”
- V13 – “Will be saved.”

There is a confidence in Paul's words here. If you confess. If you believe. Salvation is a guarantee. There's no maybe's in the confession and belief category.

IF you confess. IF you believe... you WILL be saved. Period. That's the power of our God.

That's the confidence we have as we face the enemy who clouds the minds of unbelievers. The power of the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of the blind. To shine light in darkness. To make dead people alive to God. He can and he does and he will save.

And here's what's so liberating/freeing about that – the call on our lives is not to save, it's to proclaim.

Jesus saves. We preach. So the standard of faithfulness is not “how many people are you ‘winning’ to Christ?” The standard of faithfulness is “are you realizing you are sent by your authority, king Jesus, and are you proclaiming the gospel to those He has sent you to?”

To fight the self barrier...

3. Remember the plan of Jesus.

Look back at v14... **14 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?**

Now here is where our flesh would want to co-opt our way out of the burden of sharing the gospel. “How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?” Good news! Jesus is going to send some angels down to talk to them! Don't worry – the cloud will open and a loud booming voice will declare “I am God.”

Nope. What does Paul say is the means God uses for getting the good news of Jesus to those who haven't heard...

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

You and me. In all of our brokenness and idolatry and sin and past and you name it. We are God's plan A to take the gospel to the world. That is what we will talk all next week about – God's plan and means by which the gospel will reach your neighborhood, your coworkers, your friends, your family – his plan is YOU.

You are the means by which God desires to bring many people to Himself.

Conclusion

More on that next week for now, here's what we'll be doing this week in our practice guides...

Practice Guide – replace barriers w/ Scripture/etc.

Pray.