

Faith Comes By Hearing

Last month we saw that “for profit” business is fundamentally good and God-given as (1) a means of producing goods and services that are useful to society and the general purposes of God; (2) a means of providing good employment so that men can meet their God-given responsibilities to provide for their families; and (3) a means of funding God’s ministers and ministries here and abroad.

But is that enough? Is doing useful work in a God-honoring way all that the Lord expects of Christian businessmen? For all of the virtues of secular work, and there are many, secular work is not the Gospel. By itself, it does not save anyone. In fact, with no spoken words about Jesus Christ, our work cannot really glorify God in any meaningful sense. Of course, the great assumption is that they know we are Christians. Thinking that our work will glorify God when people do not know we are Christians is like admiring a clever ad on TV that never mentions the product. People may be impressed but won’t know what to buy.

We will examine what Paul wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the believers in Rome, to discover what God has said about this. As we study these passages, ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and application of these truths.

Romans 9:30 – 10:13

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at [that] law. 32 Why? Because [they did] not [pursue it] by faith, but as though [it were] by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense,

OBSERVE

Paul wrote this magnificent letter to both Jewish and Gentile (broadly defined as non-Jewish) believers in Rome. The theme of the book of Romans is a written explanation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – a theological work really – with an emphatic insistence that man’s salvation rests not on works (keeping the Law), but on the mercy of Christ by faith.

Leader: Read aloud Romans 9:30 - 10:13 and have the group say the word “righteousness” with you. Also ask them to mark the word “righteousness” by circling it, or marking it with a colored pencil.

CONTEXT

Paul is dealing with the perplexing problem of Jewish unbelief. How could it be that God’s chosen people are lost, while the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) can be saved? Romans 9:30 begins the answer to this question.

And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for [their] salvation.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

3 For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down),

7 or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). "

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth

DISCUSS

- Describe the two types of "righteousness" mentioned. How are they different?
- How did the Gentiles attain the righteousness of God?
- Why did Israel not attain the righteousness of God?
- Who is the "stone of stumbling" and the "rock of offense"?
Leader: Have someone look up and read aloud Isaiah 8:14; 28:16; and 1 Peter 2:4-8.
- Describe Paul's heart towards Israel. *Leader: Have someone look up and read aloud Romans 9:3-5.*

and in your heart"-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus [as] Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;

10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same [Lord] is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him;

13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

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

OBSERVE

Leader: Again read aloud Romans 9:30-10:17 and have the group say the word "faith" with you, and mark them with a box, or a different colored pencil.

INSIGHT

The word translated *faith* is the Greek word *pistis*, which means the result of being persuaded to believe that something is true, even if it hasn't happened yet, or is something that we cannot see. Hebrews 11:1 defines Christian *faith*: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

DISCUSS

- List what you learn from each reference to faith.
- What must people believe to be saved?
- What must people hear? Write down the sequence of "how shall" statements and explain how this works.

is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"

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

Matthew 5:13 - 16

13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty [again]? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 "Nor do [men] light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and

INSIGHT

The Greek word translated "word" in this passage is *rhema*, which means spoken words. The Greek word translated "hearing" is *akoe*, which means literally hearing spoken words.

- *Leader: Have someone look up and read aloud Isaiah 52:7 and Ephesians 6:10-17. Compare these verses with Romans 10:15 and share what you see.*
- Based on Romans 10:12-13, are there different ways to be saved?

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud Mathew 5:13-16 and have the group say the word "salt" and "light, lamp and lampstand" with you. Also ask them to mark the word "salt" by circling it and the word "light, lamp and lampstand" by underlining.

CONTEXT

These words were spoken by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus describes the standard of righteousness required by God. This standard should also be the objective for each Christian to live out with the power of the Holy Spirit. These metaphors follow the beatitudes about the blessing and reward of being persecuted for the name of Christ.

glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go 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."

DISCUSS

- Salt is a preservative, and it is also used to enhance the taste of food. How does this metaphor apply to Christians? How can a Christian lose his saltiness? What happens to salt that has become tasteless?
- What do you think this light is? What should we do with the light we have been given?

OBSERVE

The resurrected Jesus spoke these words to his disciples and then he ascended into heaven. *Leader: Read aloud Matthew 28:18-20.*

INSIGHT

The words "make disciples" is in the Aorist tense, the Imperative mood, and Active voice, which are grammatical categories of the Greek language. This is a command that the disciples must do, and they must begin immediately.

Baptism is a biblically-mandated public declaration that a person has received Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

DISCUSS

- By whose authority are we supposed to make disciples of all the nations? Are we ever on our own?
- According to this passage, how are we to make disciples?

WRAP IT UP

This is a list of the truths that we discovered inductively from God's Word:

- All people are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ. People need to hear the gospel!
- All believers have a responsibility to tell others the good news – the gospel!
- We are commanded to make disciples, not believers.

The apostle Paul described his sphere of ministry as the "... measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure ..." (2 Corinthians 10:13) In other words, he recognized that God had given him a sphere of influence, both geographically and relationally, and he was determined to vigorously defend that sphere from false teaching, and to passionately influence that sphere with the Word of God. Read about his passion in Philippians 3:7-14.

- Each of you has been given a sphere of influence, a sphere of ministry by God, in your families, neighborhoods, and work places. Will you be like Paul? Will you defend it and influence it for Christ? If you won't, who will?
- What are some practical ways to defend and influence your workplace for Christ? What are some ways to share the gospel so that people may hear and believe? What are some ways to disciple believers so that they may grow and reproduce?