

Hearing the Good News of Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *God's Amazing Paths 4*, October 16, 2016

Romans 10:10-21

¹⁰ For with the **heart** a person puts their trust/**believes** in Jesus and is set right with God, and with the **mouth** a person **confesses** Jesus' Lordship and is delivered. ¹¹ For Scripture says,

"Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." [Isa 28:16; Rm 9:33]

¹² For there is **no distinction between Jew and Greek**; for the same one is Lord of all people, bestowing his **riches** on all who call on him. ¹³ For *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* [Joel 2:32]

¹⁴ How then will they **call on him** in whom they have not **believed**/put their trust?

And how are they to **believe** in him of whom they have never **heard**?

And how are they to **hear** without someone **proclaiming**?

⁵ And how are they to **proclaim** unless they are **sent**?

As it is written,

*"How beautiful are the feet of those **announcing good news of good things!**"* [Isa 52:7]

¹⁶ But they have **not all obeyed** the **good news**. For Isaiah says,

*"Lord, who has **believed the report heard from us?**"* [Isa 53:1]

¹⁷ So **believing** is from a **report heard**, and the **report** is through a **word of Messiah**.

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not **heard**? Indeed they have:

*"Into **all the earth** their sound went forth,*

*and to the **ends of the inhabited world** their words."* [Psa 19:4]

¹⁹ But I ask, did **Israel** not **understand**? It's Moses who first says,

*"I'll provoke you to jealousy over a **non-nation**;*

*with a **foolish nation** I'll make you angry."* [Deut 32:21]

²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

*"I was **found** by those **not seeking for me**;*

*I became **manifest** to those **not asking for me."*** [Isa 65:1]

²¹ But about Israel he says,

"All day long I stretched out my hands

*to a **people disobedient and contrary."*** [Isa 65:2]

Isaiah 52:7-10

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains | are the feet of him who brings good news, | who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, | who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." | ⁸ The voice of your watchmen-- they lift up their voice; | together they sing for joy; | for eye to eye they see | the return of the LORD to Zion. | ⁹ ... The LORD has comforted his people; | he has redeemed Jerusalem. | ¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm | before the eyes of all the nations, | and all the ends of the earth shall see | the salvation of our God.

Isaiah 53:1-5

¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? | And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? | ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, | and like a root out of dry ground; | he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, | and no beauty that we should desire him. | ³ He was despised and rejected by men, | a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; | and as one from whom men hide their faces | he was despised, and we esteemed him not. | ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs | and carried our sorrows; | yet we esteemed him stricken, | smitten by God, and afflicted. | ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; | he was crushed for our iniquities; | upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, | and with his wounds we are healed.

Wrestling with God's Good News

In Rm 9-11 Paul is striving to express the journey of struggle and discovery that has defined his life. All his life he knew that God defined his relation with the world through Israel and Torah all his life. A crucified Messiah did not fit. He fought it. Then Jesus confronted him. God called him to proclaim a crucified Messiah to Gentiles, to people outside the ancient covenant, to people not even interested in Israel's God or Messiah. Wrestling began. Paul is taking us through a highly compressed summary of his journey of scripture study and experience in preaching, seeing inclusive communities breaking down society's barriers. Even in Rome a community of Jews/Gentiles, Greeks/Romans/barbarians/slaves/women. New words shine in scripture: *"Everyone," "all the earth," "those not seeking me."*

From Event to the Transformation of People

From experience and scripture Paul sees how God works. God acts, he intervenes by his own love and grace to do something to recreate human life in relation to God, to reality. An astonishing event: God comes as Israel's anointed king/Messiah, in Jesus. He becomes one of us. Drawing near. So astonishing we can't grasp it. We Crucify him! He is raised! The event reveals that the world, values, hopes are fundamentally different than we thought. But how can that event spread to transform people throughout the world. So simple! The story must be told. Messengers sent out (like Paul). People listen, learn what God did. Some trust in what it tells: they learn of this self-giving, loving God in Jesus. They call on the name of God in Jesus as their loving Lord and life-giver. As that trust and lordship takes hold (they obey the Good News), they are transformed. Even Gentiles can do it.

Too Unexpected to Be Believed

It's an amazing process, anticipated by Isaiah 52. Beautiful messengers of good. God's kingdom breaking in, the Lord returning to Zion, redeeming Jerusalem, himself intervening with his "holy arm," and all nations/Gentiles brought to see the salvation of God. If everything went as it should, Israel would be following God in their Messiah and leading a mighty throng of transformed peoples to experience a transformed world: God's reign. But Paul has a limp from his wrestling. He grieves over his own people, Israel. Many have believed – most of the first generations of believers – but nothing like all. A far smaller portion of Gentile have believed. But it's so remarkable that any (!) believed, and there are so many more Gentiles than Jews. Gentiles are becoming the majority in churches. The challenge of bringing together different ethnic groups, races, genders, religious backgrounds, classes, etc. etc. was everywhere. But somehow this Good News did it. Isaiah 53 shows that the problem is built into the Good News by God. When God himself intervenes (his arm is revealed), he comes in such a form, so counter-intuitive, so at odds with the image of God we want to construct, that we all find it nearly impossible to believe. He avoids our images of grandeur and plunges into our sorrows and our evils. He looks punished by God. How could that be God?! But his wounds heal us with peace.

God always for Everyone!

For Paul, the amazing thing is that this challenging, wrestling process has always been a subtext in the story. Moses and Isaiah pointed to Israel's disbelief and the Gentile factor. Paul himself had experienced the deep struggle. The church in Rome felt it. We all have to wrestle with what we hear. Can we believe it, trust it. Can we call on this self-giving Lord?