

Romans Chapter 10 - John Karmelich

Title "Why 18 inches matter!"

Most of church going Christians have heard sermons with an "18-inch lecture" as the key point. That's (roughly) the distance from our head to our heart. I bring that up, as most people know the Jesus story. The problem is most people know that in their head, but they don't believe it in their hearts! I realize it is old news to most of us. What we must realize is we must pray for God to open people's hearts to the Gospel story and not worry about trying to say just the right words to convince people it's true. Most of you realize I constantly preach God knows all things! The real issue is the Spirit of God opening up the hearts of people to accept that! So, if all it's up to God, why preach the Gospel? For starters Jesus gave us (believers) our "marching orders": He told His disciples (us) to go into the world, tell them about the trinity, baptizing new believers, and use our lives as a witness for Him. (See Matthew 28:19.) That just means it's not about how good we are or how well witness to others, it's a matter of being a witness for Him and willing to pray for God to open people's hearts. We don't know who'll be saved. God set it up that way, because He wants us to use our lives to be a witness for Him to all people!

One of the first verses I ever memorized was Romans 10:9, "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". We can say it to someone's face, convince them what it is, the Word of God, they believe it, but they still aren't saved as it entered their head, but not their heart. Again, it's not our ability to preach the Gospel that changes a person, it's the Holy Spirit changing their hearts. We are just instruments God chooses to use to state the good news. I state all of this "18-inch lecture" as in effect that's the underlying point of Romans 10. I realize it's about Paul preaching Jesus to his fellow Jewish people, but if we don't get the 18-inch part of the message, then we're missing the point why Paul wants us to understand this text. Let me explain this chapter in more detail and hopefully that'll help.

In Romans Chapter 9 (As my regulars know, the chapter breaks were added many centuries after it was written), Paul's main point is not all Jewish people are saved for having a Jewish background. It's back to God picks who He picks, and we must accept that. A religious Jewish person could ponder, "If Jesus is the Messiah, why have most Jewish people rejected Him? An answer is the only expectation they've got is THE Messiah will rule the world from Israel, not die for our sins! It is the false view that anyone can be saved if they work hard to obey His laws! A counterargument is God's perfect by definition! So how is it possible to perfectly please Him by being a good person? In this chapter, Paul will get into all of this. He even explains that God's aware a large majority of Jewish people do reject the Gospel, as in effect it led to many Gentile (non-Jewish) people accepting the Gospel message. It does NOT mean all of the Jewish nation are not saved, just as many gentiles who say they believe Jesus died for all of their sins but don't act on it are also not saved. In other words, lots of people believe it in their head but they still miss heaven "by 18-inches". Meaning they believe it as head knowledge, but not in their hearts!

OK then time for specifics on Chapter 10: Chapter 10 opens in a similar fashion to Chapter 9. The last chapter Paul stated he wishes he could spend eternity in hell, if that meant salvation for the Israelites as a whole. (Not possible, of course!) Chapter 10 is Paul stating religious Jewish people have a lot of zeal for God, but again they miss the main point. It comes back the idea that they know a lot about God and the Old Testament well. They won't come to Him by faith, but in effect try to impress people with how good they can be! It's the same way a lot of Christians will argue you're not really saved unless you do this that and the other thing! We're only saved by our faith in the fact we get who Jesus is, as I stated in

the first few paragraphs. Being a good witness for Jesus is how we show the proof of our salvation, but salvation for us is by faith alone in the Gospel Message!

In effect I've already discussed the first few verses, as Paul's main point is religious Jewish people have a lot of zeal for God, as they know His laws well and try to be in right standing before God by acting in a way that they think will get them into heaven! They miss the obvious, that we must come to Him just in faith of who Jesus is. Works are evidence of our salvation, but Paul's point is for our salvation all we must do is believe who Jesus is. I know that's basic for us Christians but it's so easy to think, God must really be pleased with how I'm acting at this moment. Verse 4 says, Jesus is the "end of the law" for all of us who believe in who He is and what He did for us. That does NOT mean He doesn't care about our behavior. It simply means we can never act "good enough" to please Him. I realize that's old news for us, but for most nonbelievers they still think it's a matter of good deeds outweighing bad ones!

For the next eight verses Paul wants to pound the point home that the Old Testament also teaches one's saved by faith alone! Remember the majority of Jewish people reject the Gospel message, so Paul has a great desire to show that his view is "biblical". Paul says it is wrong to ask God to bring the Messiah down from heaven (as He already came, and He will return when He says so!) At the same time Paul's also saying not to ask God to raise the Messiah from the dead as well, it's already done! Again, most of us already know this. Keep in mind Paul is explaining how non-believers can "blow it". Then he gives again one of my favorite verses that I quoted in the second paragraph. It's a great verse to memorize so when someone asks us what we believe we can quote it! Remember we can't get more saved and yes it only God who saves, but it's our job to be a witness for Him to all people! Then Verse 11 is another of my favorites that says all who are saved "won't be put to shame". It means when we go to heaven, God is not going to make us watch all the ways we messed up! That alone is a great reason to believe Jesus is God (as well as the fact it's true)! Verse 12 and 13 are the reminder that God isn't just a Jewish God, but a God of all people. God choose the Israelites to be His witness to the world, but God desires all of us give our hearts to Him to be saved.

Verse 14 to 17 are the reminders of WHY we were saved: To be a witness for Him! God doesn't write in the sky believe the Gospel and be saved. Instead, the reason we were saved is to be a witness for that message of salvation. That doesn't mean we must quit our jobs and walk around with a sandwich board saying Jesus is God. Jesus said the way we lead people to Him is by showing the love of God working in our lives. Yes, sometimes preaching the basics is necessary. More often, it is letting people see how the Gospel has impacted our lives and then letting the Spirit work in people's hearts for salvation! The verses here praise Christians for the fact we use our lives as a witness for Him!

Verses 18-21 are Old Testament quotes to show that God is well aware most Jewish people will reject the Gospel message. In other words, nothing is a surprise to God. The Old Testament teaches us God brought His salvation method to non-Jewish people (the fact of how Christianity spread fast after Jesus rose from the dead) in the hopes they see all those people turn to Jesus and it makes them jealous! For those of you who've read the book of Acts, Paul dealt with a lot of suffering (at the hands of the Jewish authorities) who couldn't stand to hear him preach the Gospel message! I am just saying the evidence is there from the earliest days of the Christian church of the gospel message working! Multitudes of both Jewish and non-Jewish people were saved. The sad part is most Jewish people since then still reject the Gospel message given they want to prove their worth to God based on how they act! That's why Paul's "pounding the pulpit" to preach salvation is by faith alone. I know this is old news for us veteran, long term Christians, but at the least this should remind us of how to be a good witness for Jesus. There are multitudes of people who know the Gospel message, but it hasn't sunk in their hearts. We can't preach

"hard enough" to change that. That is why the key issue is prayer that God opens people's hearts as we use our lives as a witness for Him. I hope all of this has been helpful.

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that one, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff, and again I'm grateful for all of you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!

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