



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 10:14-21

Romans

"God's Open Arms"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're going to finish Romans chapter 10 this morning. We'll look at verses 14-21. If you have your Bibles open.

"How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!'

"However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

"But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have;

'Their voice has gone out into all the earth/And their words to the ends of the world.'

"But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says,

'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation/By a nation without understanding will I anger you.'

"And Isaiah is very bold and says,

'I was found by those who did not seek Me/I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.'

"But as for Israel He says, 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'"

May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for the time we have to be here. And we have much to be thankful for. You have blessed us abundantly. You have blessed us spiritually and materially. As believers in Jesus Christ, You've blessed us with faith. You've brought us into Your family by adoption. And You've given us all of the rights and the privileges of sons of God.

And so we can boldly approach the throne of grace as we do at this moment. We can do that at any moment of the day. In fact, You graciously invite us to come frequently to the throne of grace, continually come before You to seek help in time of need.

And so Father, we look to You for blessing this morning. We avail ourselves of that great privilege. We come to You when we seek Your blessing upon us spiritually in this hour as we approach the text of scripture. We ask that You'd bless us with it. We have such a privilege to read Your inherent word and then to spend time to consider its meaning together, to seek, to understand it, and how it applies to us.

And yet, Lord, we cannot come to an understanding of these things in our own strength, and by Your grace You've not left us to ourselves. You've given us new hearts. You've regenerated us. But more than that, You've given us Your Spirit, the third person of the Trinity to protect us and guide us and, in fact, teach us, open our minds to understand the truth of this text.

And so we pray for that ministry in particular this morning. We pray that the Spirit of God would move upon the hearts of each one of us, open the mouth of the preacher to proclaim the truth well, open the hearts of the listener to hear and make application of the truth.

May our time together be profitable and enjoyable, and may it be a time in which we are built up in the faith so that we might do as Paul urges us to do, at least by implication, and that is go out from this place with the good news of the gospel.

And so we look to You to bless us in this way. Bless us spiritually, bless us physically, Father, and the material things of life.

And You have done that. We acknowledge, Lord, that we are blessed beyond the blessings that any nation or people have enjoyed in the history of the world. And such abundance that there are few, if any, who know want in this land.

And you have blessed so greatly and consistently that we tend to take it all for granted and forget that it all comes from You. We work, we earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, and yet, Father, even that is a gift from You. We have the strength to do that because You give it. We have the health to do that because You give it. We have opportunities because You open opportunities to us for labor. And so we confess that we so often forget that it comes from You, but we do thank You and praise You, Father, that You give so much.

We pray for those who are lacking, though, those who are going through times of difficulty and trial, who are facing surgery or who have experienced it. We pray that You'd give blessing. Give skilled surgeons, give grace and time of healing, and give encouragement in the midst of affliction. Enable those who are suffering trials, whether they be physical or emotional, spiritual, whatever the case may be, may they be drawn to You and given direction to look for the promises that You've given and take great comfort and be encouraged through them.

We do take comfort from the truth that we have studied in this great book of Romans and studied in the eighth chapter, where we're reminded that everything that happens to a child of God, one who is called according to Your purpose is for his or her good. We don't understand that oftentimes. At least, we don't see how the trial is for our good, and yet we know by faith that it is and so encourage people in that way.

Bless our nation, Father. We pray that You'd give our leaders wisdom. We pray for our service men and women abroad, that You'd give them protection and give them success. And bless our land with an awakening to spiritual things and to the need of salvation, to the

need of a Savior. Cause people to look to You. Use us to that end and equip us this morning to go out and be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Bless us again this evening when we come back to this place to remember our Lord. We do thank You for His death for us, that He saved His people from His sins. So as we remember Him tonight, we pray we'll do so properly and well, and do so until He comes. That's the instruction that's been given to us. It is a reminder that He is coming again. We look forward to that day, Father. May it come soon. We pray in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] On Mount Corcovado in Brazil overlooking the city of Rio de Janeiro is the monument to Christ the Redeemer. It is a colossal statue, and while I'm not really comfortable with visual representations of Christ, this one does express a truth, whether it's intended or not, because it represents Him standing with arms outstretched, as if inviting all of the people to Himself.

That is the verbal description in the Bible of God. "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." I like that representation. God is merciful and patient. He is a soul-winning God who invites sinners to come to Him for life, for salvation. That is His nature.

Paul understood that. It was his desire as well. If Paul was anything - and he was many things - an apostle, theologian, a teacher, a defender of the faith. But if he was anything, he was a soul-winner, the greatest missionary of the church.

In fact, he wrote the book of Romans with his eye on Spain and to seek the help of the church in Rome for his new mission to the far west. To do that, he makes mention of that very fact in chapter 15, in verse 24. Paul had a great burden for the lost. He could wish himself accursed for the sake of the Jew. He poured out his life for the salvation of Gentiles. He was a great evangelist.

And in Romans 10:14-21, he gives the logic for evangelism and explains the urgency for worldwide missions. But the fundamental reason for it, the reason Paul crossed land and sea to preach the gospel

to the lost, was because he was a child of God. And it is the nature of God to save the lost. He is merciful and compassionate, Paul wrote, in Romans 9:15. His arms are open wide to sinners, he writes in Romans 20:21.

If God is anything - and He is many things - He is a Savior. He's not made salvation difficult and does not require sinners to crawl over broken glass or hot coals to get saved. He's already accomplished salvation. All a person must do is believe. Verse 13, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

That is a promise of the universal application of the gospel. If anybody, whoever that person may be, calls on Jesus Christ for salvation, he or she will be saved. That is a broad invitation, but if it is to be received, if people are to learn about Christ and learn that His arms are open wide to them, then the gospel must be taken to them. How will people believe if they don't hear about Christ?

As John Murray wrote in his commentary on the book of Romans, calling upon the name of Christ doesn't happen in a vacuum. It happens when the gospel is proclaimed. Paul makes that point, but he makes it in a series of questions, four of them which give the logic and necessary for evangelism and world missions. The first question is in verse 14. "How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" After all, no one will call on Him unless they first believe that He is a Savior. We don't call upon a doctor unless we believe that there is one and that he is, or she is, qualified to practice medicine.

And here, we're told that we must believe before we can call upon Him. And in this instance, in verse 14, the word "believed" is used in the sense of being convinced that He is true, that the gospel is true.

As we have seen before, there are aspects to saving faith. First there is knowledge. A person must know about Christ, know about the person of Christ as the Son of God and the work of Christ as the Savior, as the one who was offered the sacrifice for sin.

And second, there is ascent, the acknowledgement that the facts about Christ, the facts about the gospel, are true. It's being in agreement with them. Faith is not irrational. Faith understands the facts about the gospel. It understand the facts about Christ and it believes them to be true.

And thirdly, there is trust, or commitment, what Calvin described as confidence in the gospel. That is what calling on the Lord is. It is putting one's trust or putting one's confidence in Christ.

But it is the second part of faith that Paul speaks of here first in verse 14. "Believed in" is ascent. Before a person can call on Christ, he or she must believe the facts about Christ, believe that they are true. But to do that, a person must first learn of Christ. "How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" Well, obviously before a person can believe anything about Christ, he or she must first hear about Him.

And yet, what is significant about Paul's statement of this second question is he doesn't say "hear about Christ," but "hear Christ." "How will they believe in Him whom they have heard?" In other words, the voice of Christ is heard in the gospel. He is present in those who preach Christ to the lost. Now He Himself taught that to His disciples. He said to them in Luke 10:16, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me."

The voice of Christ is heard in the voice of the preacher, to the degree that the preacher proclaims the words of Christ, the truth of the gospel, but not beyond that. It's not the preacher's word that has authority. It's not the preacher's word that is the word of Christ, but it God's word in the preacher's voice. It is what He says. It is the scripture, in other words, that is taught, that is the voice of Christ.

And the Scripture's unique. Scripture's not like any other word in the world. It is effective. It is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, the author of Hebrew says. It pierces the soul, Hebrews 4:12.

The Bible is unique. God speaks through it and He changes lives by it. And so the ministry of the word, this ministry, is serious. It's not something to enter into casually. For the preacher, he must give that ministry accurately. He is dealing with the infallible, inherent word of God and must communicate it accurately and serious for those who hear it, because they must hear it and they must obey. But how will it be heard? How will Christ be heard without a preacher? That's Paul's next question.

Leon Morris, in his commentary, points out that Paul's question reflects first-century life when people were much more dependent on hearing news and hearing the truth than they were in reading it. Today the gospel is spread widely by the written word. And people are used to reading, much more than they were in Paul's day. So in principle at least, we could add reading to hearing. But still, God's primary means of communicating His truth is to communicate His truth personally, verbally, face to face, by Christians speaking or preaching to others. But for Christians to do that, they must go. They must be sent. How will they preach unless they are sent, Paul asks?

And if they are truly sent, they're sent by God. Not all are. Not all who go out have been sent by God. In Jeremiah's day, the Lord said of the false prophets, "I did not send these prophets, but they ran." Nothing's changed over the centuries. The world is full of false prophets, is full of false teachers, men who were not sent, but they ran. They gladly entered pulpits and they preach today. So how can we know whether they are sent by God or not?

There's only one way to know that. A true teacher of God, one who has His words, are the one who speak His words, that teach the scriptures. They teach the Bible. That is what the evangelist, the minister, the servant of God does. He proclaims God's word, does not proclaim his own word. He proclaims the word that God has given to him.

The word that's used here for "preach" describes the function of a herald in the ancient world. He was someone who was given a

message and told to proclaim it. He didn't invent the message; it was given to him, just like a postman delivers other people's letters. The herald proclaimed another person's message. Maybe it was the proclamation of the king. Maybe it was the proclamation of a high official, but it wasn't his own proclamation, it wasn't his own message.

And it's the same with the one who preaches, who teaches God's word. He is given a message and appointed to proclaim it. As Leon Morris writes, a self-appointed herald is a contradiction in terms. God appoints people and send them out with His message of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, and He sends people throughout the world to do that. That is His will.

Now, Jesus Christ said that in Matthew 9:37 and 38. He said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." And so we're to be doing that. We are to be praying that workers will be sent, that preachers will go out. And that means that we are to be going out. This is the work of the church.

There's a story that is often told about a meeting of ministers in England in which great interest in foreign missions was expressed by some of the young men. One of them was William Carey, who upon expressing his great interest in missions, was rebuked by an older minister, John Ryland. "Young man," he said, "Sit down, sit down. You're an enthusiast. When God is pleased to convert to heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine."

Now that story is often recited as an example of a Calvinist attitude toward missions. God elects people. He will save them. We don't need to be concerned about those things. It's a caricature. It's not true. Carey and the others were Calvinists and they went, because they knew that God would save the heathen. He would save the elect by sending them to preach the gospel and be lights.

It was William Carey with his strong sense of mission and the sovereignty of God who had as his motto "Expect great things from

God; attempt great things for God." And so he went. He went to India and died there 40 years later after long and faithful and difficult service.

This is what Christians do. It's God's will. It is our mission to go into the world, whether it is to Calcutta or if it is to the office here in Dallas, but it is to go and to give the gospel and live the gospel, because it is the nature of God to love sinners and call them to salvation. It's our nature to do that.

One of the most significant stories in the book of Acts, at least to my mind one of the most significant stories, is one of the least memorable, but one of the most encouraging. And it's the founding of the church of Antioch in Acts 11. It happened when unnamed people, believers, came to that great city, speaking to the Greeks. Now that was not done up until that point. They spoke to Jews. And then there was a mission, as we see in Acts 8, up north from Jerusalem and Judea into Samaria. That was unusual.

And then something even more unusual occurred in Acts chapter 10 when Peter preached to Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, in his household, and Gentiles were suddenly being saved. But it was not widespread until we come to chapter 11 and people, unnamed people, are going to this great city of Antioch and they're speaking to the Greeks, speaking to the Gentiles, and preaching the Lord Jesus. Luke writes the hand of the Lord was with them and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

It wasn't the apostles who did that. It wasn't even a notable individual like Phillip the Evangelist who did that. It was unnamed Christians who simply went and began speaking to people. They didn't hold a large campaign. They didn't pitch a tent in the middle of Antioch and hold a great service, not that there's anything wrong with that, but that's not how it happened. They simply spoke and they preached Christ to those they met and God blessed them and a great church was established. In fact, the church of Antioch becomes the great church of the century.

The center of gravity for the church begins to shift from Jerusalem and the Jewish church to Antioch and the Gentile church. The gospel spreads to the Gentiles. It spread because people began speaking the gospel to others. That's people like you and me going out and just telling others about the grace of God and Jesus Christ, and the Lord is with us when we do that. He's in our speeches when we are giving the gospel to others.

And the need for that is again confirmed from Scripture, from Isaiah 52:7. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things." We don't usually think of feet as beautiful. And really, the beauty here is not in what the feet are, but what the feet do. They bring good news. That's what's beautiful. And that's always been true.

When a Greek soldier ran 26 miles from the battlefield of Marathon to the city of Athens, gasped, "Rejoice, we conquer," then collapsed and died, he was considered a hero. He brought good news. And his feet, so to speak, are honored today with the marathon race.

People who bring good news are always considered beautiful people and there is no better news than the gospel. It is the message, "Rejoice, we conquer." Christ has defeated the enemy. He has defeated Satan at the cross. He has defeated sin. He's defeated death. And He is giving out the spoils of victory in the gift of eternal life and the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gifts that the Spirit gives.

And we would expect, in light of all of that, we would expect that reports of missionaries bringing the gospel to the heathen would be success stories. Reality is often there are accounts of rejection and martyrdom. That has been the experience of God's messengers down through the ages. That's the response that Paul recounts in verse 16, from Isaiah 53. "However, they did not heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"

That's the question that many missionaries have asked. It's what Christians feel when they have gone back to family and friends with the news of their conversion and the gospel and have been rejected.

We would think that the world would be eager to hear and receive the news of salvation, the news of grace, that God has done it all. There's nothing left for us to do. He offers free salvation to whomsoever will call upon His name. We would think that people would be eager to hear such a magnificent message. Would can be greater than that? Eternity has been secured. No need to fear death.

The grave has been defeated. Heaven has been opened up. Eternal life is given to all who believe. And yet it's not the message the world wants to hear. It's not the message that the world receives. The reality is often the gospel is met with complete indifference or annoyance, or even outright hostility.

That was Paul's experience. He went into synagogues and he preached the good news that the Messiah and the Savior had come, that which Israel has long awaited has arrived. The Savior has come. But his report was largely rejected and he was driven away. Paul experienced the same from the Gentiles. He was stoned in Lystra, jailed in Philippi. But still he went, because that is the only way people will come to call on the name of the Lord. That's the way of salvation, preaching the gospel.

He sums up the matter in verse 17, where he writes, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Faith isn't inherited. Faith isn't washed into our souls with baptism, or infused through the Lord's supper. We don't get it by sitting in these pews. We don't get it by dreams or visions. It comes from hearing. And it grows that way.

It's one of the great concerns that we have as Christians. The question that we often ask is how can I increase my faith? How can I grow in my faith, be firmer in my faith, more mature? Well, the answer is here. It's from the word of God.

In his sermon notes, Dr. Johnson wrote, "Faith then follows from the study of the word, not through prayer, reading the prayer book, even reading through the Bible, despite of the fact that many of these things are good things. Faith comes through reading and hearing

the Bible." He illustrates that from the experience of Dwight L. Moody, who said that he prayed for faith and he thought that someday it would strike him like lightning. But it didn't.

And then he read Romans 10:17 and he realized that faith comes by hearing the word of God. He closed the word of God and he prayed earnestly for faith and now he realized he had to open the word of God, and so he spent time reading the Bible. He studied it and he wrote faith has been growing ever since.

Now, it's not wrong to pray for faith and to pray that God would strengthen our faith. We do that, like the man in Mark 9:24, who said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." But the Lord helps our unbelief and He gives us faith through His word.

So if you want faith, you must hear God's word. You must put yourself under the teaching and preaching ministry of God's word. You must spend time in God's word. You must read it. You must study it. You must meditate upon it. You must reflect deeply upon it.

That's how a Christian's faith increases. That's how saving faith begins. It doesn't happen in a vacuum. Saving faith occurs when Christ is preached, when the message of His death and His resurrection is proclaimed, and only that message. It's the only message that is the seed which produces saving faith. There's no salvation apart from that message.

A man may stand up - a woman may stand up - tell good stories and give wise counsel, but if the crucified Savior is missing, if the resurrected Christ is missing, if the proclamation that salvation is through faith alone and Christ alone is missing, that's just good advice that may help you on your way through life, but it won't get you to heaven. This is the message that must be preached. Preaching leads to hearing, and hearing to believing. And Paul preached that, preached it quite well. He preached it clearly.

So why didn't people believe when he preached? And specifically why didn't the Jews believe when they heard the good news about their Messiah? Now these verses, verses 14-21, are broad

in their application about the need for evangelism, the logic of it, and the response to it. But they are primarily about the Jewish response to it.

Chapters 9 through 11 are about the problem of Jewish unbelief and why Israel rejected Christ and the gospel. That's what Paul answers in the remaining verses of the chapter. In chapter 9, he explained it from the divine side, and chapter 10, he explains it from the human side. God is sovereign in these matters. He's made that very plain. But now he makes very plain that man is responsible. God's sovereignty is not an excuse for unbelief. Man is absolutely responsible, and Paul proves Jewish responsibility further by raising and then refuting two explanations that were given to excuse Israel's unbelief.

The first excuse is given in verse 18. Paul said, "Faith comes from hearing." He's made that point. And so the objection is raised, "But surely they have never heard, have they?" In other words, maybe the gospel didn't reach them. And that would explain their unbelief.

Paul rejects that. He says, "Indeed they have." And then he notes, or he quotes, Psalm 19 as proof. "Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the end so the world." Psalm is about nature and how it reveals God universally. It begins, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God."

So the existence of God is everywhere known in nature, and yet Paul is using this that the gospel has gone forth, that special revelation has penetrated throughout the world. We might wonder how he comes up with the proof for that from this particular psalm. But if you read on, the second half of the psalm is about God's revelation in Scripture.

Verse 7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul/The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." And Paul saw a parallel. He saw a pattern between general revelation and special revelation, between the revelation given in nature and the revelation given in scripture, given in the gospel. And he was saying that the

proclamation of the gospel was becoming as worldwide as the light of the sun and the stars. It has gone out to the ends of the world. Not in the sense that every individual had heard it. After all, Paul was planning a mission to Spain, implying that not everyone had heard. He knew that.

Paul's statement, this universal statement that he makes, is what F.F. Bruce called "representational universalism," meaning the gospel had been preached widely enough for it to be said that representatives of Judaism throughout the known world had heard it. Now Paul knew that, because he's preached to vast numbers of Jews in Asia and in Europe. So he could dismiss this first excuse as empty. They had heard the gospel.

Well, maybe they had heard it, but maybe they hadn't understood. It's possible to hear without perception. Maybe that was the problem. That's the second objection given in verse 19. "Surely Israel did not know, did they?" Yes, they did know. And Paul proves that from both the law and the prophets. Now, he doesn't say what they knew, but from what both Moses and Isaiah declared, Israel knew that their unbelief, their rejection of God's word, would have serious consequences.

First Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 to show what Israel knew. And in that chapter Moses reviews Israel's history, recounting God's blessings on the people, and their response of idolatry. God had blessed them greatly, but they had worshipped idols instead. They made God jealous with their idols, as He described as being what is not God, then says in response, "I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation. By a nation without understanding will I anger you." Now the Lord was speaking of the Gentiles and their salvation, which would provoke the Jews to jealousy.

And Paul recognized in that quote from Deuteronomy the mission that was unfolding toward the Gentiles that he was engaged in that and recognized in that prophecy the Gentiles' inclusion as the people of God. The Jews should have recognized that. That's what

Paul is stating. Because from their beginning they had been forewarned of their unbelief and they had been forewarned that God would deal with them. He would reject them. He would, as Paul will say in Romans 11, break them off from the olive tree, and He would bless the Gentiles and graft them in. They should have known that this would happen.

It's stated very clearly in the writings of Moses, Deuteronomy 32. It was revealed in the law, but also in the prophets. In fact, Isaiah is even clearer than Moses. In verse 20, Paul quotes Isaiah 65:1, "I was found by those who did not seek Me. I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me." And that too is a prophecy of gentile salvation. And it is stated in language that clearly describes God's grace and the gospel. Pictures God calling to people who weren't looking for Him, taking the initiative to make Himself known to Gentiles and save them when they weren't seeking salvation.

Which brings us back to the beginning of the chapter, where the Jewish people are described as having a zeal for God. They sought Him, but they did not find Him, because they sought Him in the wrong way, by trying to establish their own righteousness by lawkeeping, rather by faith and receiving the gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ. That is how God is found. He makes Himself found. That is sovereign grace. Salvation occurs when the gospel is heard and believed. It is through faith alone, not through works, not through all of our efforts. We can be zealous to do good things. That will not save us, because that is not the way of salvation that God has set out. It is through Christ and Him alone. It is believing in Him and receiving the righteousness that God has already obtained for those who believe.

Well, this was Paul's gospel and it was not an invention of the apostle. It is the message that Paul and all of the apostles preached, and the early church preached. It is the teaching of the Old Testament. That is the deep well from which the apostle drew his theology. And Israel should have known all of this. It was all revealed, the consequences of unbelief and God's grace to the Gentiles. Israel had

been forewarned in the Law and the prophets, and the gospel of salvation had been preached to them. It had gone out into all the earth, so Israel was without excuse.

Still, God has not forsaken His people. And Paul ends the chapter on Isaiah 65:2 with God reaching out to Israel. "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." That sums up the argument of chapter 10 and shows the greatness of Israel's sin. It was a willful and persistent rejection of God's persistent patient grace. And that only strengthens the guilt of the nation for its unbelief.

But in that, also there is hope. This picture of God with His arms open wide to Israel indicates that judgment is not the last word, but mercy is; salvation is His last word. And that, because that is the nature of God. He is saving God. He is a soul-winning God. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their way and live. And so He waits for His arms open wide for the sinner to come to Him and live.

It's a remarkable picture of the Almighty. Have you ever tried to hold your arms out for just a few minutes? It's hard. It's impossible to do it for a day. But God has done it every day, all day long, down through the ages. He holds His arms open to sinners, like a father does for a little child, inviting him to come. God is full of compassion. We see that revealed of Him in this picture of a God with His arms open wide, and we see that compassion revealed all the more clearly in His Son, because time and again He stretched out His hands to the people of His day and pleaded with them to come and to live.

In Matthew 11:28, He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Can imagine Him giving that invitation with His hands outstretched.

In John 7, He stood up in the temple on the last day of the great feast, with thousands of people around Him. And He said, "If anyone

is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." His concern and His compassion for the lost was expressed most poignantly for the city of Jerusalem. As He approached the city in Luke 19, He looked over that city; He wept over Jerusalem.

In Matthew 23:37, He poured out His heart, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling." Were His arms outstretched to that obstinate city when He made that statement? I can imagine they were. As they are today and will be every day until the last day when He returns for judgment. He is patient with this race, and compassionate, even though it is an obstinate race. He is patient with us. He was patient with all of us who have believed and is patient with us. That is the only reason that we have believed and come to Him.

All of us who are believers in Jesus Christ are by nature a disobedient and obstinate people. None of us would have changed. None of us would have come to Him except by His sovereign grace. And we are still in constant need of His grace. We are prone to disobey. We are prone to resist His will.

But God is patient with us, leading us, protecting us, nourishing us through His word by the Holy Spirit. That is God's nature, and as believers in Jesus Christ who are new creatures, it is also our nature. It is the way we are, and so it is the way that we must live. We must live according to the people that God made us to be. We're to be like Christ. We are to have a concern and a compassion for people. We're to be patient with people, as our Lord is, patient with one another.

We're all very anxious for people to be patient with us, but so often we're not patient with others. That's not the way our Lord is. He's patient, patient with the most rebellious, and we are to be the same. We are to be patient with those who fail us, those who stumble along the way, and we are to be patient, and we are to be concerned, and we are to be compassionate for the lost. We are to be open our

arms to the lost. To be patient with them, to pray for them, to witness to them.

This chapter explains that Israel is responsible for its lost condition. It is without excuse. But it is also a call to missions at home and abroad. Jew and Gentile will not call on the name of the Lord unless they hear the Lord through the gospel that we give. And we are to give it, not simply it's the way to salvation for them, but more fundamentally, give it because that is our nature. It is our nature to give the gospel and to go, as it was our Lord's and is our Lord's.

When someone asked David Livingstone why he became a missionary to Africa, he replied, "I was compelled by the love of Christ." And that is why we do what we do. And so Livingstone took his medical training and he took the gospel into places Europeans had never gone. He fought the slave trade, he healed the sick, and won souls, because he was compelled by the love of Christ.

He went for the same reason that Paul went, and multitudes of Christians have gone, down through the centuries, because it is Christ-like to care for sinners and point them to the Savior. And by God's grace we will become more and more like our Lord and live more and more as He lived. And by God's grace, if there's anyone here who does not know Christ, has not believed in Him, by God's grace you will see your need for the Savior and come to Him in faith.

The picture of God's outstretched hands recalls the cross, where our Lord's compassion was demonstrated at a great cost when He bore the sins of His people and died in our place. And now He calls people to Himself. He calls people to believe in Him as the Lord and Savior. And He's patient. Every day is a day of grace for the unbeliever. Every day God stands with outstretched arms and He speaks to you through the gospel.

He is patient and infinitely patient, but His patience is not eternal. Someday the arms of God will close. The day of opportunity will end. Judgment will come, and if you are found without faith when that day comes, you will be without excuse.

So come to Christ. Come to Him now. Don't delay. Look to Christ. Believe in Him and be saved. May God help you to hear Christ speaking to you in the gospel, and believe, and help all of us to rejoice in the voice that we have heard by His grace, and go out and serve Him faithfully. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for the text that we have read and considered, the great message of that text. It reminds us first and foremost that Israel is without excuse. The message went out. It went out to the ends of the earth. They had ample warning throughout their Scriptures, throughout the Old Testament of what would happen as a result of their unbelief.

And yet we come short if we limit the application of that to the Jewish people. It is an application that is for the Gentiles as well. We have heard Your truth. We're to respond to it. We're without excuse if we don't.

So Father, bring conviction to hearts that may be hardened to You. Soften them. Open them up to receive the gospel and bless us who have believed, that we would do what Paul has urged at least by implication throughout this chapter, and that is to go with the gospel, to proclaim the Lord to others.

We have the good news of life. May we teach it to others faithfully. In Christ name. Amen.