

The Gospel According To Paul: Romans

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The Good News of Salvation Through Faith in the Messiah (10:14-15)

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" [Isaiah 52:7], (Rom 10:14-15).

Paul appears to be speaking of his place in all this. As an apostle of Christ his role was one of heralding (*kerussontos*) this message of messianic deliverance. The herald (*kerux*) in the ancient world was a runner who came to the village or city with important news; hence, the reference to “the feet of those who bring good news.” The herald would come to the marketplace or appropriate place for a public announcement and declare to the people that he had an important message for them.

This is what Paul would do when he entered a village or community. He would first go to the synagogue and announce (*kerusso*) that he had news of a significant event which occurred in Jerusalem, then inform them of the appearance of one believed to be the Messiah, who was crucified then raised from the dead by the power of the God of Israel. Those who refused to believe Paul’s report or message, usually the leadership, would expel him from the synagogue. Those who wished to hear more would follow him. Most usually these were the godfearers (i.e., Gentiles who attended the

synagogues out of interest in the teaching of Judaism, especially their monotheistic God). Paul would often go to a central location of the community and begin proclaiming (*kerusso*) to the Gentiles the message concerning the event he had reported to the Jews. This pattern can be seen throughout Acts, chapters 13-14 and 16-19. Those who heard (*akouo*) the call (*kaleo*) of God to come out of darkness into light and responded (*hupakouo*) to the call became known as, "the called out" (*ekklesia* - the term given to the "church" in the NT). Paul's role as a herald (*kerux*), as depicted in Acts 13-19, and these verses of Rom 10:14-15, are especially illuminated by a reading of Acts 26:14-18, Paul's report to Herod Agrippa of Christ's commission to him as the apostle to the Gentiles.

We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' ¹⁶" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me," (Acts 26:14-18).

**(5) Israel's Rejection of This Good News Is
"According to the Scriptures" (10:16-21)**

*But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message (*akoe*)?" [Isaiah 53:1] ¹⁷Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. ¹⁸But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." [Psalm 19:4] ¹⁹Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." (Deut. 32:21) ²⁰And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." (Isaiah 65:1)¹ ²¹But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." [Isaiah 65:2], (Rom 10:16-21).*

A reading of Acts, chapters 13-19, will readily evidence the fact of Paul's words here. In all of his travels, he would go first to the Jewish synagogues; his success there was virtually nil. Those who did hear (*akouo*) his good news and submitted in obedience (*hupakouo*) to the gospel were most usually these curious Gentiles called "the godfearers."

The Greek word for "hear" in these verses is *akouo*. The word for obey is *hupakouo* (*akouo* with the prepositional prefix *hupo* - under). *Hupakouo* means, "to come under submission to what one has heard." There is something of a word-play with the word *akouo* here in these verses, something of which Paul, as a rabbi schooled in midrashic exegesis, would have enjoyed. In 10:14, Paul argues that one cannot believe in what he has not heard (*akouo*). Then in verse 16 he says, "not all have obeyed (*hupakouo*) the gospel." He then quotes Isaiah 53:1, "who has believed our report (or message)." The Greek word for report is *akoe* (something one hears – a report or message). Then, in verse 17 (in many translations), Paul says, "Faith comes from hearing (*akoe*) and the hearing (*akoe*) from the word of Christ."

This rendering misses what is being said in the Greek text. Since the word *akoe* is translated "report" in verse 16 (a quote from the LXX of Isaiah 53:1), then it would be more consistent to follow this translation of *akoe* in verse 17. It would then read, "Faith comes from the report, and the report concerns the word of Christ." The term *akoe*, as used here, does not mean the sense of hearing; rather, it has to do with the content of what is heard.

The faith Paul speaks of here is Christological faith; i.e., faith that is produced by the report or message concerning the word of Christ or message about Christ. "But they did not at all hear (*akouo*)," says Paul. The negative particle is in the emphatic position in the Greek text, indicating an attitude - they refused to hear. Because they would not hear, they did not believe. And because they did not believe, they did not call upon him (confess him to be Lord). Because they refused to hear, Paul turned to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 18:5-6), and this was all as the prophets of old had foretold; e.g., Isaiah 65:1-2, 11-15,

"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'² All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own

imagination- (65:1-2)

"But as for you who forsake the LORD and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, ¹² I will destine you for the sword, and you will all bend down for the slaughter; for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me." ¹³ Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "My servants will eat, but you will go hungry; my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. ¹⁴ My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit. ¹⁵ You will leave your name to my chosen ones as a curse; the Sovereign LORD will put you to death, but to his servants he will give another name. (65:11-15)

Conclusion

Perhaps, the most familiar of Paul's words here in this text are found in verse 17, "Faith comes from the report, and the report concerns the word of Christ." Throughout this section Paul is addressing those Jews who sought to prove themselves worthy of acceptance of God through a righteousness of obedience to *Torah*. Paul is insisting that the only way one can be acceptable to God is through a righteousness which is achieved by belief or faith. What is this faith of which Paul speaks? How does one come by such a faith? The faith of which Paul speaks is messianic faith, faith that centers in Jesus of Nazareth and his claims to be the Messiah or Christ. "Faith comes from the report or message (*akoe*)." What report or message? "The report (*akoe*) concerning the word (or proclamation) of or pertaining to Christ."

The report (*akoe*) is the gospel of Christ, which Paul had heralded throughout the Mediterranean world. The expression "word of Christ" is "*hrematos Christou*." The Greek term for "word" here is not "logos," as one would assume; rather, it is "*hrema*," which means, "that which is spoken, a declaration, a speech, a message delivered, a story told." This Greek term has to do with the oral delivery of a speech, a message or proclamation. It is the word from which the Greek deity Hermes was named, in that he was the herald or messenger of the gods of Olympus. The word *hretor*, an orator, was from this word family; in fact, our word

“rhetoric” derives from this word.

The “word of Christ” to which Paul has reference is the message or good news he mentioned at the outset of this letter. “I long to preach (*euangelizo* – proclaim good news) to you who are in Rome,” he writes, “for I am not ashamed of the gospel (*euangelion* – the good news of God’s visitation), for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes,” (Rom 1:15-16). Why would he say he was not ashamed of this message? The news that God had come was not considered, “good,” by everyone. The very implication that God had been here in person, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, was a *skandalon*, a cause of offence and indignation, to many Jews. Not so this Jew! To him the report he heralded was the most wonderful declaration ever announced, the best news the human race could ever received, the most powerful story ever told to the race of man. It was God’s story of the deliverance of man from the forces of darkness that had enslaved him. Paul was fulfilling his apostolic commission, given to him by Christ at his conversion,

I am sending you to them (your own people and the Gentiles) ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me,” (Acts 26:17-18).

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