

SPEAKING UP, ROMANS 10:13-19

Pax Romana 25

Intro: Have you ever just wished you could kick yourself in the behind over a mistake that really cost you? (ex: Shoulda bought Google stock way back!) I'll bet Decca Records knows the feeling. They're the ones that didn't sign the Beatles because they were not sellable. And then there are the publishers that rejected Harry Potter. He's got a place in Disney World now! Anyone know the name of the author? (JK Rowlings). Any fans that can repeat a so-called "spell"? (Expecto Petronum). And to think that no less than twelve publishing companies turned the Potter stories down! I'd like to use Hogwarts student body as an illustration today. Interesting thing about spells in stories like Harry Potter: there apparently is a quite a process in learning to do them just right. You may recall many a scene of little wizards in Hogwarts saying the same thing over and over again, while waving their little wands just so. They couldn't just think them. And they couldn't merely mouth the words. They had to be said and said correctly. Now let me be clear. I do not believe in magic. I do however believe in demonic powers that manifest in our lives and do supernatural things we label as magic. Hear me now, Don't mess with them!! (I can tell you real life stories of why, if you care to know.) But I'd like to make an interesting comparison to the so-called spell casting in stories like Harry Potter with the Christian story: while the Gospel is not a spell, it must be spoken into someones life and accompanied by the supernatural power of God. All of which immediately means several things for believers and unbelievers.

1. I need to call on the Name of the Lord for all pieces of salvation.

Calling on God is the appropriate response to the calling from God. First, if

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you are to live on past death, to be saved, to have your sins forgiven (that's all piece one: justification), and second... if you are to access the presence of God and his power in your daily life, say, over your emotions, your tongue, your desires, etc.(that's piece two: sanctification) –then you will have to call on the name of the Lord. Calling on God must become a part of who you are. Become a person who “calls on the name of the Lord”!

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3, NIV.

The unbeliever has to call of the name of the Lord to receive salvation and God's presence in her life. In the second sense, the believer has to keep calling on the name of the Lord to keep growing, improving, learning, being rescued by God, etc. Everything is not automatic with God. James says “You don't have because you don't ask.”

Now when we say “call on the name of the Lord” we mean something very specific in terms of salvation. Calling is not the same things as swearing or adding God's name to your oath, or invoking his name in emergency after you've shut the car door on your hand. Or saying OMG in a moment of fright. These are more offenses to his name. No, calling on the name of the Lord means calling out of belief, faith in him as savior, and in repentance of sin. I urge everyone in the room to “call on the name of the Lord”. Make it a part of who you are. It is the process by which God chooses most to act in your life!

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2. If the Gospel is a supernatural power that must be announced verbally, I am called to speak of Jesus out loud. v17

A. That's right, you are called to speak. No one can call on God who hasn't heard about him. Think about it, what are the possibilities of someone coming to know God's truth on their own. We already saw in Rom.8:7 that the sinful nature cannot submit to God. Jesus said people won't seek him at all unless the Father does something in them first, draws them. How do you think God does that? *Fallen people do not come looking for God, or faith, or the church. God and his church go looking for them.* You don't build a church under the pretext that "build it they will come." That's why we've adopted the vision statement *BE PASSION-ATELY INVOLVED IN OUR COMMUNITY by the way.* Look in our text.

- 1) v18: Who is this verse about? It's from Psalm 19. It's about Nature! We call nature God's "general revelation". We call God's written words "special revelation". I want you to see something. Ps. 19 has two parts; general revelation, and special revelation. Find Psalm 19 in your bible a minute...

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."
Psalms 19:1-4, NIV.

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Paul is saying, that everything around us is pointing to God, but people can't see it. Without clear gospel people will stumble over the general revelation of God's reality in nature.

“men...suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”
Romans 1:18-20, NIV.

2) So we need to speak God's truth, “special revelation”. That's what the second half of Ps.19 is all about starting a v7: God's law, his statutes, his decrees, the Bible. Information straight out of heaven! Supernatural communication from the spirit world, people! Now get this. Even with clear speaking people will “stumble” over the special revelation of Christ in scripture, unless they hear the “utterance” of God. We'll come back to that utterance in a minute.

Look at v19. That's an Old Testament quote. A quote from the Hebrew Bible, special revelation! Israel had all the necessary steps for belief (sending, preaching, hearing) and Israel still didn't believe! They had revelation but couldn't understand it. God sent preachers. Prophets spoke God's words. Israel heard the words. But the last step didn't happen, even among God's chosen nation? What else is necessary?

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3) Lets come back to that “utterance”. Paul calls this “utterance of faith” (v8), “utterance of Christ” (v17). It’s not the usual word for “word” (logos). It’s rhema/utterance. Now, it’s a synonym for logos, but with an accent on the spoken word. You and I are called to speak up for God, but even when we do we must remember that the power is only and always of God. Calvin in his commentary on Romans said, “The voice of man can by no means penetrate into the soul.” Only the utterance of Christ can penetrate the soul. When you speak up, also pray for Christ power/utterance to speak out through you. As you walk over to your neighbor, pray “Jesus please speak through me. Give me a chance to point you out, to credit you, or honor you out-loud.”

How powerful is the utterance of Christ? Well Paul quotes Isa.52 and 53 in our passage (v15, 16). Those chapters are about the suffering servant messiah. Those chapters include this well known description fulfilled literally by Jesus in the 1st Century (written 600 years earlier).

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” Isaiah 53:5-7, NIV.

It makes me wonder. Why didn’t Jesus open his mouth? Was it because Jesus utterance was powerful enough to destroy his enemies? John 18

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isn't enough. Paul makes it clear that *people don't call on God unless God calls to them and he does it primarily through human persons*. God's elect do not enter into their election, or come into the family God has chosen them for without hearing about Christ and then believing! That's God's ordained manner in which it happens. The word "preach" in v15 doesn't mean sermons, or lectures. It means "speaking up", sharing what you know, just like you share your vacation pictures on Facebook, and your trip to the mall, and the salad you had for lunch, and some obnoxious video you saw somewhere. The term means to "herald". Tell. That makes us all preachers. Yes it's my vocation, but it's every Christian's calling. God calls to the world all day long (v21) and he does it through us. Believers speaking of Christ are the means by which other people enter into their election.

So don't say, "Oh I'm not sent, so I don't speak up." It's not true. You are sent. When we talk with our neighbor, or when we build something in a neighborhood like a ramp, or a shed, and when we hand out clothes and necessities (like at Serve our City next week) –we need to accompany all that with the "word of Christ." ["Jesus cares about you." "This is because of God's goodness. Enjoy"] It's up to God's power to use it. It's like our words are arrows we shoot, but the Holy Spirit can light them on fire. But if we don't shoot some arrows, there aint nothing to light on fire, is there? That's how God does it, through you, and me, and probably mostly not at church because unbelievers aren't coming here much.

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3. If the Gospel is a supernatural power that must be announced verbally I am called to speak up and challenge the world's falsehood.

A. The common saying in the first Century was "Caesar is Lord". Rome controlled the whole known world. So, saying "Jesus is Lord" (v9), amounted to saying that Caesar wasn't. That the Pax Romana was not the lasting peace we all wanted. And indeed Rome and the Pax Romana is gone now, isn't it?! It was also common in those days to say "*There is no other name among men by which you can be saved than Caesar!*" What does Peter say in Acts 4:12.

"...It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ...Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." Acts 4:9-13, NIV.

That took courage alright. Remember, they are occupied territory run by Rome, and they are countering the PC slogans of the media of the day!

B. Are there days when you would prefer to ignore the culture wars, name-calling, and "fake news" in the news? I'll bet there are and I feel the same way. In fact, God's word warns us "not to quarrel about words" (2 Timothy 2:14) and to "avoid irreverent babble" (v. 16). But God's word also tells us that his scripture (special revelation) is useful for teaching, correcting, train-

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ing (3:16). And here it is quite clear that nothing happens in the spiritual side of a person without God's truth being proclaimed to them. Specifically, the "word of Christ." We are to "rightly handle the word of truth" (2Tim2:15).

How do we "rightly handle the word of truth"? We do it gently, and patiently, and kindly. We do it with humility. We do it by *BEING PASSIONATELY INVOLVED WITH OUR COMMUNITY!* That's our vision statement. Say it with me once... Matthew Henry said, "It is our duty not only to hold fast, but to hold forth the word of life." We should all know that the church is only one generation away from extinction. The church is not a fort. It is an filling station. Our mission is to be out there helping the next generation of God's family enter into it! So when the Spirit leads us to speak truth to divisive issues, we should remember to **be humble**. We are all broken people. The person on the other side of the issue is someone God loves as much as he loves us. Second, **be prayerful**. Ask God for wisdom (James 1:5) and for the words to speak when called to speak (Luke 12:12). But we must speak up to the world far from God.

Conclusion:

Listen, what was true in Paul's day under Roman rule is true in our day too. There is only one way for a person to be forgiven of sin and live in heaven forever, and that is through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. That faith is a gift from God, not of human works and God will give it to everyone he wants to. The way he gives it is through you, his family who have already heard and believed. You have family out there folks, that don't know they

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are family! Some are Arabic, some are African, some are Jews, some are poor, some are rich. They come from all walks of life. They live on your block and in all countries of the world. But not one of them can call on the name of the Lord without hearing about him, and they won't hear unless we speak up, and we speak up because we are sent. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! Let your feet be beautiful!