

Get Their Name

Knowing your story

Romans 10:9-15

July-22-18

Passage: ⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. ¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” ¹² Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³ For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”

– Romans 10:9-15 NLT

Message:

When I was in college, I had this friend Matt. He was a great guy and we got along pretty well. We ended up being roommates my sophomore year. He was also Jewish and knew very little about what it looks like to be a Christian. I remember there were many times where he would look at me kind of puzzled because of what my beliefs were and what I would do, but we got along and were friends even after college. There was this one point where I had been listening to sermon or something and I realized that I had never witnessed to Matt. I had never told him about Jesus dying on a cross. I had never told him why I was a Christian. I felt God very firmly telling me that I needed to witness to him. Here I was, being a “good” Christian, yet I hadn’t stepped out and shared my faith with him. Sure, I had spiritual conversations around him, but I hadn’t told him what Jesus did. I hadn’t told him how my life was different. I had just assumed he knew. So, I knew that I needed to share with him. I began looking for the right opportunity so that I could calmly and effectively present the gospel to him. My moment came one day. I looked him in the eyes and then I carefully, calmly, exegetically shared the gospel with him... in other words, I spoke loudly and quickly startling him after he asked me to pass the ketchup. I hadn’t really witnessed to him, rather I had witnessed at him.

Let's be honest, it can be difficult sometimes for us to really share the good news with people. There are a number of things that keep us from doing it. There is a fear that we'll mess it up. We'll fear that people think we're weird or they'll get upset with us. We think to ourselves, I just need the right moment to share about God. I just need that opening to share about spirituality. We wait for them to ask us a question about God or church. Yet, that moment never seems to come. How many of you have been there? You think, I want to share the gospel with this person, but I'm just waiting for the right moment or the right transition, but it never seems to be the right moment. Maybe you've been waiting for the right moment for the last couple years. Or maybe you think that it's not all that important to share your faith with someone else. Maybe you think that if someone isn't in the church already, then they probably aren't coming because they've heard it all and made the choice not to be part of the church. We have a laundry list of reasons why we don't share our faith, but at the end of the day, we just don't have an urgency about it.

Cultivate an urgency for sharing your faith.

Now I've been in your shoes when it comes to a sermon like this. You hear a sermon on sharing your faith and you suddenly feel guilty for not sharing. You hear the same story over and over. We should be sharing our faith. We should be witnessing, and we make it sound like it is this obligation that we committed to and that because we aren't doing it, we aren't living up to our end of the bargain. Anyone else ever feel that way? But witnessing shouldn't be done out of guilt though. It shouldn't be one of those things that you do out of obligation or because you feel like it is your part in this whole salvation bargain thing you have with God. Sharing our faith should be a bit more natural for that. There is this internal motivation that should inspire us.

Think about this. The word gospel means good news. The term was often used to talk about a birth of a new king or a great victory. It was spread throughout the lands quickly by messengers. The gospel of Jesus is that the world has been made new, that God has victory over death and that Jesus is King. That is good news, but do we really own it? Do we really believe it with our whole hearts? I want you to think about that for a moment. What do we normally do with truly good news? We share it. We try to get the word out to as many people as we can. In fact, when we share good news people want to know. They want to hear it. When I shared that my wife and I are expecting, I knew that if certain people found out without me telling or if they found out just through Facebook, they might have felt bad because I didn't tell them personally. When I shared that we were having a baby the news spread like wildfire.

Clip from Alpha – Sharing the news of the birth of their child.

You see nobody needed to be told to spread the message they just spread it. They heard the message, they realized how good it was and couldn't wait to tell someone else. This is what it is like for the story of Jesus and what he has done for us. It is good news worthy of sharing. Our passage today talks about this sharing of our faith and what that does for us.

Passage

Look again at the passage. It says, if we believe and confess then we will be made right with God. Paul is kind of sounding like this idea of obligation again doesn't he? I mean we get the whole faith thing being important. We harp on the idea that faith alone saves us. That by believing in Jesus we are saved. So why does Paul go on to say that declaring our faith, declaring that Jesus is Lord, is what saves us? Does this mean that there are two requirements for this whole salvation thing? Believing and confessing? Have we gotten this whole faith without works thing wrong?

The answer is clearly no. Paul throughout the book of Romans tells his readers that it is through faith alone that we are saved. So, what is he doing here? Why is confession brought into this discussion? He is actually using a rhetorical device that he does often. He is taking a passage from the Old Testament and relating the gospel to it. So, he is looking at Deuteronomy 30:14 where Moses is declaring to the people of Israel the nearness of God and therefore the nearness of God's promises. Moses told the people that the message of God was close to them. That it wasn't distant from them but was on the very hearts and mouths. Paul is telling us the same thing. He is saying that this message of the gospel is not something that is outside of us. It is not something that is some arbitrary concept that we need to explain to people. Rather it is something that is deeply personal. It is something that we have felt. We have experienced it. Moses was telling the people of Israel that they had a story to tell. They had a story of God's provision and God's deliverance. It was a story that they were to pass on so that others could know that God would provide for them and help deliver them.

You have a story to tell.

You see we aren't talking about sharing every single truth of scripture. We aren't trying to explain the intricacies of theology. We aren't mining the depths of exegesis and hermeneutics and other big seminary words. We are simply sharing our stories. We are sharing what God has done for us. Paul is reminding his audience of the same thing that Moses told the Israelites. God has done something for you. Something amazing and it is Great news! He has changed you. Romans 10:12 says that God gives generously to us. Think about that. If someone were to give you an incredibly generous gift you would be quick to share that with others. You would probably be texting while you're being given the gift to someone telling them the story. I remember when my parents blessed me with a car while I was in college. I was absolutely floored, I never expected something like that. Yet there it was. I was so excited to tell people about it after the fact. I was ecstatic and overjoyed to be able to share that. God has given us amazing gifts as well. He has given us a new identity. Many of you here were trapped in addictions or a life that you would rather not talk about. But talk about what God has done!! Talk about the fact that you were stuck in a place that was slowly consuming you and now you're in a place where God has rescued you and given you a new name. What an incredible story to tell!!

We need to have gratitude for that. We need to remember that story. Remember what God has done. We need to remember because that same thing that God gave you is offered to

everyone. Paul says that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. He says that this gift of salvation that God has given is free and accessible to anyone. If you're in chains to addiction, if you're trapped in bad situations, if you're living a life of sin, God has the ability and the desire to offer freedom. To break the chains that bind you. He offers this freely as an immensely beautiful gift.

People need to know our stories.

Here is the thing though. Many people don't know this story. They don't know what God is offering them. Not just that they don't believe it. They don't know it! Now you're thinking we live in America, surely everyone knows the story of Jesus. Everyone knows it and they're simply ignoring it or don't believe it. The truth is they don't. Paul says in Romans 10:14-15 that they don't know because we haven't told them. They don't know because we need to share our story. There is this article I came across while I was writing this sermon. It talks about the curse of knowledge. What they mean is that when you know something you can't imagine what it is like not to know that. In other words, once you know a fact, it is difficult for you to imagine not knowing that fact. So, you know who Jesus is, and you come here, and we talk about him all the time, so in some ways your life is filled with stories about Jesus. Yet, imagine if you weren't coming to church. If you had little interaction with Christianity. There are plenty of people living next door that are in that boat.

MICHAEL JR. CLIP

So, they may know the name of Jesus, but what he did or does is not necessarily something that they know. My roommate Matt had no idea that Jesus died on a cross. When I told him, he looked at me like I was crazy... ok maybe that had more to do with the loud and quick way I told him. But he also didn't know things like what the manger was. He assumed that a nativity scene was a manger and a manger was a nativity scene. The idea that a manger was where animals ate wasn't even in his knowledge. So, we assume that people know, but the reality is that they don't because we haven't told them. So how do we do that? How do we share our faith?

We are to share our faith story. Last week you heard from someone who shared their journey in faith. You heard how God led them into a new place. You heard how God changed their lives. That is what it is about. Here is the thing. We are called witnesses, right? A witness in a courtroom has one job. That job is to tell what happened and what they observed. They aren't the prosecutor or defense. They tell the story of what happened. They bear witness to the events that they saw. What have we seen? Some of you have seen your lives drastically changed since coming to faith. Some have had marriages restored or addictions defeated all because of Jesus. These are our stories and they are vital to the Christian faith.

Now I'm not saying you need this incredibly long and detailed story. Think of an elevator speech. Think of something that is easily to retell and something that conveys the points that God has changed you to something new.

There are practical things you can do as well to help you in this area.

Share your story:

First share your faith story in a small group.

- **In small groups**

(PLUG FOR SMALL GROUPS) This is a great place to practice telling your story. Share your story with your kids.

- **With your kids.**

We as parents are the first influence on our children. Yet many don't know how their parents came to faith. Tell your story to them. If your children are mature enough, even tell them about the things that God has saved you from.

- **While you serve others**

Share your faith story while in service to others. People often wait for the right time to share. Sometimes you get this when you serve others. They ask why are you serving? Because God has asked me to. And God has already served me in amazing ways. Share your faith story in the context of worship. We would love to have people up here sharing their faith stories.

- **As part of worship**