

Unstoppable

An All-Encompassing Vision

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AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING VISION

Romans 1-3

As you are turning with me to Romans 15, I want to tell you a story that I think will help set the stage for what I want us to talk together during our time in God's Word. And I know, think I have said this before, I know preachers have a tendency to exaggerate, and for that, I apologize, but I need to let you know from the very beginning of this story that there is, there is no exaggeration, you are going to think I am exaggerating, but there is no exaggeration whatsoever in this story I am about to tell you.

There is a church that I have had the opportunity to preach at a couple of times before and that God has given me the opportunity to develop a relationship with, this church a little farther west than here, we'll just kind of leave it at that, but this is a church, a small church, not a big church, but I had the opportunity to preach at a conference where some of these members had been there and then they had invited me to come and preach there a couple times. They have a small group of people that prays for me on a continual basis. And actually, I never asked for anything along these lines, never have, but they send me a check pretty regularly just to support what God is doing in the ministry that He has given to me.

So one particular Sunday, I was scheduled to preach there on a Sunday morning. My wife, Heather, and I had driven over there on Saturday and I was planning on preaching on the Great Commission, on making disciples of all nations. Saturday night when we got there, we went over to a house where the pastor and his wife and two deacons and their wives were hanging out, had dinner together and then we just sat around talking afterwards.

And I was sitting there in their company just kind of telling them about some of the things that God was doing in my own life and the ministry that God had given me the opportunity to be a part of, whether it was doing inner city stuff with homeless folks in New Orleans or with internationals in New Orleans and then I began to share with them some of the opportunities that God has opened up overseas to go into some pretty difficult places, but to make the gospel known among people that are very anti-Christ in many ways.

And I'll never forget what happened, as I shared that, one of the deacons sat up in his chair and he looked at me in the eye and he said, "David, we want you to know how excited we are about all that is going on there." He said, "You know, if you asked me, all those people that you are talking about that are so anti-Christianity, I just assume God annihilate all those people and send them to hell." You ask me what I said in response to that, I didn't say anything.

I didn't know what to say, I was stunned into silence. "I just assume God just annihilate all those people and send them to hell."

And the conversation when on and progressed and I began to think, okay, I'm supposed to preach on the Great Commission in the morning, this is going to be very interesting. And so

I got up the next morning, went to the church service and during the welcome the pastor was going to welcome all those who were there. And before I got up to preach the pastor began to go into this side note about how thankful he was to be living in the United States of America. And he began to talk about how great it was to live in the US of A. And how much he would never want to live in any other country outside of the United States because of all that we have here.

It was a real patriotic speech. I thought Lee Greenwood was about to pipe in from the background. We were having a moment there and I began to think, okay, the pastor has just proclaimed to the church that he would never live anywhere outside the United States and I'm about to preach on making disciples of all nations so this is really going to be interesting.

So I got up and I preached the sermon and gave the invitation at the end and not a lot of response that particular day. And I remember when I was standing on the front row, before the service closed out, the pastor got up and he said, "Now before we dismiss there's just something, a couple of other things I need to say." I thought, "Oh great, here we go."

And he begins to share. And he says, "David, like we told you last night, I want you to know that we are really excited about the things that God is doing in and through your life." And he looked at me in front of the whole church and he said, "And we promise you, we will continue to send a check to you so that you can do those things so that we do not have to go there and do them ourselves."

I can feel at this point my wife who is standing behind me, her hand comes on my shoulder, she can tell I am about to lose it. And then he continues. He said, "I remember my last church where I was serving, we had a missionary come from Japan and he shared about all that God was doing and I told my church that day, that if they didn't give to help this missionary in Japan that I would pray that God would send their kids to go over to Japan to work with him." Like it was a threat. And he said, "We gave that guy a laptop." Listed all kinds of things that they supported him with, and the service closed out.

Heather and I got into the car and began to drive away saying nothing; we couldn't believe what had just happened. And I began to be angry and then it was one of those moments where God kind of turns the tables and I began to think, you know, those deacons and that pastor have said what most of the people who are sitting here today believe, but are just not bold enough to say.

Now, before you say, "That's to brash, Dave, that's a little to bold. Don't you think you're being a little hard on us?" Let me ask you a question: how many of us are living like people in the inner city are okay without Jesus Christ? And how many of us are living like it's okay to give a check, just so long as we don't have to go there and do it ourselves. How many of us are really praying? How many of you with children are really praying that God would raise up your son, your daughter to go into the Middle East and give their life to make the gospel of Jesus Christ known. And how many of our churches are operating like the hundreds of millions of people who have never heard the name of Jesus are okay without him.

And so I want us to dive into a question that I believe is one of the most important questions facing the church of Jesus Christ in America today. And I want us to take an honest look at the heart of God and what it means for our lives and specifically for The Church at Brook Hills.

One of the most important questions facing the church today, here's the question, "What happens to people who never hear about Jesus?" What happens to people who never hear about Jesus? Now, this, I believe is an extremely important question. Over a billion people who have never even heard His name. Never even heard the name of Jesus. I have met some of them in India and other places in Asia. Haven't even heard His name. You say Jesus, that's the first time, who is that? Over a billion people who haven't even heard His name. So I think it's an extremely important question and I know from the very beginning, this is a pretty emotionally charged question.

It's pretty thick because when we think about a billion and a half people who haven't even heard His name, we begin to think about, "Well, if God is loving and if God is gracious then those people certainly wouldn't go to hell, would they? What happens to people who never hear about Jesus?" And I believe that at the core, this is a very emotionally charged question. And I know it's not an easy question to answer. Unfortunately, there is not a place I can take you in Scripture where Jesus says to His disciples, "Some of you have wondered what's going to happen to people who have never even hear about me, here's the answer." We don't have that in the gospels anywhere. But what I want to do is take you to a passage of Scripture or some passages of Scripture that I think help us answer this question in Romans.

Look with me at Romans 15. I want you to see the background of this book. Romans 15:23. We are going to read this and then I want you to think about why this guy named Paul wrote this letter that we had some opportunity to spend some time together in last week, look at chapter 15:23, why did Paul write this letter? Look at what it says:

But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ (Rom. 15:23-29).

Okay, a little New Testament history here to help us get a grasp of what is going on right here. It is going to show you Paul's missionary journeys. This is Paul's first missionary journey. You will see that he first goes to a city called Antioch. In Acts 13, Paul, his buddy Barnabas get sent out by the church at Antioch. The church at Antioch was the first church to really send people out to go and share the gospel in places that had never heard the gospel, and then Paul leaves. They go down to Cyprus and go north and head into some different areas and then they are coming back. And you'll notice that they came back after they had left Antioch. That was kind of home base for them.

Let me show you Paul's second missionary journey. Once again, Paul leaves from Antioch, he heads north. God says, "I want you to go to some places you've never been before." So they go even farther north. They go up into Thessalonica and into Athens and into Corinth. And they come down to the far southeast into Jerusalem. And then where do they go back

too? They go back to Antioch. That was home base for them. Home base for the church sending out. Okay?

Third missionary journey. You'll never guess where Paul leaves from. Antioch, this is the home base so he heads out from Antioch north, goes in a lot of the places he has been before and he comes to Corinth. And that's where he writes this book, the letter to the Romans, the people in Rome. He writes this book. And he says, we just read it, "I'm going to go down to Jerusalem, down to the far southeast." But you will notice, guess where Paul doesn't plan on going back to this time? Antioch, he's not heading back to home base. Why is he not going back there?

He is now going to Rome. You have Jerusalem and Antioch, then Sidon. You will notice that Paul said, "I am going to go from Corinth down to Jerusalem," and then he said, "I am going to come to you at Rome." But what did we just read? Was Rome Paul's final destination? No. He said, "When I come to you, I need you to assist me on my way to", where? Spain, exactly. That's where Paul wanted to get. The people there had never heard the name of Jesus and Paul writes to them at Rome and says, "I need you to help me to get there."

You see, Antioch has been Paul's home base for mission, but if he wants to get all the way over to Spain, "Is Antioch the most logical place to help him get there?" No, obviously you don't head east in order to get west. He said, I need Rome; I need you guys to help me get to the people who haven't even heard the name of Jesus. I believe that is why Paul wrote this book.

Paul did not write this book just to give us a good systematic theology of what the gospel is about. He wrote this book because he wanted these people to know how great the gospel was so that they would be compelled to help him, assist him on his way to Spain.

Almost kind of like today, I don't know if you have received one of these before, but sometimes when people go on mission trips, they sent out missionary support letters and they will write a letter and they will say, "Hey, this is an opportunity God has given to me to go overseas and I want to write you and tell you about it and ask you to pray for me and if the Lord leads for you to help me out financially in order to go on this trip." I think that's what Paul is writing here. It's a missionary support letter. Now, I have never seen a missionary support letter that looks like this in our culture today, but I think that is what Paul is doing.

So, in light of that, the whole purpose of me showing you that is to show you that Paul is writing this book to convince people of the need to take this gospel to people who have never heard it before in Spain. And as a result, when it comes to the question of what happens to people who never hear about Jesus. I think the ramifications of this book are huge.

Seven Affirmations

Now, again, there is not a point in this book where I can show you what happens to people who never hear about Jesus, here is the answer, so instead, what I want to do is I want to give you seven affirmations; seven truths that I think will help inform the answer to this question. Seven truths and I want you to see in the book of Romans.

So start with me and turn all the way back to Romans 1. Romans 1, and we'll start in verse 18, which is where Paul really begins his discussion of why these people need to hear the gospel. Romans 1:18. Look at what the Bible says there and begin to think about what happens to people who never hear about Jesus.

Now, we are going to read some different passages. Some we will kind of fly through, some we will spend some more time on. I want to encourage you to really follow along and really pay close attention because there are some points where if you misunderstand me, you might well label me a heretic and kick me off the stage and I really don't want that to happen, so I really want you to follow along close here, okay? All right? And hopefully, we won't be heretics.

Okay, Romans 1:18, *"The wrath of God,"* Paul says, *"is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who 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"* (Rom. 1:18-21).

All people know God the Father.

Affirmation number one, all people know God the Father, all people in all history know God the Father. All people. Whether those of us who are sitting in here, the guy in the jungle in Africa, the person in the village in Asia, anywhere in between, all people have knowledge of God. The Bible says, it is being revealed continually. The wrath of God, the character of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men. He says, the whole creation, this thing is revealed by creation. We know that God exists because we see His handiwork around us when we look at creation, we can see that this didn't just happen by chance. There is a God who is behind this. He reveals His character through creation, continually. I want you to see that Paul says, "It is clear. Clearly seen." There is no question. People know.

Continually revealed by creation, it is clear and it is sufficient, so that men are without excuse, so for every single one of us, God is continually revealing His character to us as well as to the people in the middle of the jungle of Africa, by His creation, continually, in a clear way so that none of us are without excuse. We all have the opportunity to know God the Father, all people know God the Father, sound good? We all on the same page? Okay, here we go.

All people reject true knowledge of God.

Affirmation number two, all people reject true knowledge of God. Look at what verse 21 through 23 says. *"For although they knew God,"* now that makes reference to what we just talked about, all people knew God, *"they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles"* (Rom. 1:21-23). In other words, they rejected true knowledge of God and began to worship idols and images that they created.

Now, this is not just talking about people in Paul's day. It's talking about people in our day. Every single one of us has rejected true knowledge of God. Now, this is a fundamental point here, but it's a point that often we misunderstand when it comes to this question of what happens to people that never hear about Jesus.

I remember having a conversation with some college students at a conference and we were talking about this very issue. And there was a girl who was sitting across the table and she said to me, "Well, what about people who are doing the best with the knowledge that they have." She said, "For example, the Indians who came over to this land, maybe the Aztec Indians. They came over, they didn't have a Bible, they hadn't heard about Jesus and the worshiped the sun god. Don't you think, I mean, they were doing the best they could with the knowledge that they had. Don't you think that God is honored in that? Aren't those people religious?" I want you to think about that based on what we just read from Paul's word.

Aren't they religious? No, they are idolaters. They are idolaters; we are idolaters. We cannot make images of God and worship those and expect a Holy God who deserves all our praise to be honored in that or to be pleased with that.

This is the essence of idolatry and all of us are guilty. Whether it's ourselves, our jobs, our careers, our houses, our possessions or whatever in our lives. We put on a pedestal and we begin to worship those things. That's idolatry, it's taking the rightful worship that is due to God away from Him and putting in on something else. And whether it's worshiping the sun god or worshiping your investment plan, either way it is idolatry. All people including every single one of us here as well as all the people in Africa and Asia have rejected true knowledge of God.

There are no innocent people in the world.

Affirmation number three, based on that we can say there are no innocent people in the world. There are no innocent people in the world. You see, what Paul does here is from Romans 1:18 all the way to chapter 2:16, Paul talks about a group of people called the Gentiles. That's the non-Jewish people, the nations. And you can almost picture, as Paul talks about how evil they are, you can picture the Jewish readers of this letter giving hearty amen's to every paragraph, "Yeah, those guys are terrible, look at them."

And then we notice, it's very interesting, in chapter 2:17 there is a major shift, Paul says to these Jewish people who are reading the book, and who are amening how evil the Gentiles and the nations are, he says, "Now you, if you rely on the law, brag about your relationship to God." He begins to talk about people that are Jewish, if you know His will and approve what is superior because you have been instructed by the law and he begins to say, even though the Gentiles are disobedient to God, you are in the same boat. There are no innocent people in the world.

And that is why, when it comes to the middle of chapter three Paul says, "*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one*" (Rom. 3:10-12). There are no innocent people in the world.

Now, it's at this point if you were to ask me, "David, be honest. What happens to the innocent guy in Africa who has never heard of the gospel before?" I would look at you and I would say, beyond a shadow of a doubt, I believe the answer is that that person would go to heaven. "What happens to the innocent guy in the village in Asia who has never heard the gospel before?" I believe with all my heart that that person would go to heaven.

Now before you begin to label me a heretic and begin to think what is this guy talking about, let me remind you that if there is an innocent guy in Africa or Asia, who has never heard the gospel before, if he is innocent, if she is innocent, then he or she has no need for a Savior. He's not done anything wrong so why would he be separated from God? He's not

separated from God. He has a relationship with God and he doesn't need to be saved by the blood of Christ, the only problem is, he just doesn't exist.

Please hear me on that, this is how this question is most often phrased. "Preacher, what happens to the innocent guy in Africa who has never heard the gospel before?" We bias the question from the very beginning in favor of this person who has "never done anything wrong," who is in the middle of a jungle and it's just not true, whether it's a guy in Africa or Asia or any one of us sitting in here, every single one of us has rejected through knowledge of God. And we are not innocent.

Let me remind you, that we get this idea particularly in our culture today. We get this idea that the default is heaven and it's just not biblical. The default is not heaven. The default is hell. We have sinned against God and we deserve separation from Him forever.

So yes, an innocent person would not need a Savior. The problem is, there are no innocent people in the world not one innocent person. No where else in the world. Make sense? Are we on the same page?

All people are condemned for rejecting God.

Okay, affirmation number four. Okay, we got that, you following along with that, all people are condemned for rejecting God. All people are condemned for rejecting God. What I want you to see is at the end of Paul's argument, when you really come to Romans 3:19-20, he says some very important words and I want you to look at them with me.

He said, "we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (Rom. 3:19-20). What this is saying is, is that because all of us stand before God with sin in our lives, all of us have disobeyed God. We stand before Him accountable for our sin. And we stand before Him deserving separation from Him. All people are condemned for rejecting God.

Now, this is a very important point right here and I want you to think about it with me for a second. Some people would say, and I think it's a valid question, "Well, what about, okay somebody in another place that's never heard the gospel before. Never heard the name of Jesus, would God, a loving and gracious God, really send that person to hell, for rejecting Jesus, even though they never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus?"

Think about it. Do you think it would be loving? Do you think it would even be just of God to send someone to hell for rejecting a Christ that they never even heard about? I don't think it would be. I don't think that people would be sent to hell for rejecting Christ that they never even had the opportunity to hear about, but don't miss the point of this passage, all people are still condemned for rejecting who? For rejecting God.

We begin to get this idea, "Surely, if they haven't heard of Jesus that they get a pass somehow on this thing. Surely if they haven't heard of Jesus that they aren't held accountable to the same thing that we are held accountable too." And obviously, yes, they have a different level of knowledge, they haven't heard the name of Jesus, but I want you to think about it with me. What about the ramifications? If somebody gets a pass, simply because they have not heard of Jesus, I want you to think about how this would completely deter the missionary enterprise of the church. Think about it with me.

If the people in the middle of the jungle in Africa are okay and are headed to heaven, simply, precisely because they have never heard the name of Jesus, then the worst thing we could do is go and tell them about Jesus, right? Because when we do, we would increase their chances of condemnation.

Think about how this looks practically. If you believe that people are okay, they get a pass because they haven't heard the name of Jesus. Think about how this looks practically, even here in Birmingham.

Imagine going onto a college campus here in Birmingham and there are people on college campuses all across the United States who still have never heard the name of Jesus. Internationals, for example, I want you to imagine going up to an international student on the UAB campus over there. I want you to imagine going up to them and saying have you heard about Jesus and they look at you and say, "No, I have never heard of Jesus."

Now, if that person gets a free pass simply because they have not heard about Jesus, then what would you do in that situation? You would pull them aside and say, "Okay, if anybody tries to tell you about Him then immediately put your fingers in your ears and begin yelling really loudly and runaway." Because that would only increase their chances of going to hell.

Now, we know that that's not biblical. We know that's not biblical. We know that all over Scripture we are seeing to take the salvation and to take this gospel to the ends of the earth. All people are condemned for rejecting God. And as a result, we need to take the gospel to them.

God has made a way of salvation for the lost.

Let's move on to affirmation number five. Follow along with me, affirmation number five. It's pretty bleak at this point. It's pretty bleak, all people, no innocent people in the world. All people condemned for rejecting God. I am thankful that there becomes a turn in this book that we are reading called Romans. Affirmation number five, God has made a way of salvation for the lost.

This is one of my favorite points in the whole book of Romans. Hopefully those of you who were here last week saw this come alive, maybe, but when you see Paul get's to the end and he says, "We know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law and every mouth will be silenced and held accountable to God." I can almost picture Paul, whether he is writing or dictating this, just tears filling his eyes. No one declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.

Then he picks the pen back up, wipes the tears away and he says, "*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe*" (Rom. 3:21-22). You see, all people, including all of us here are condemned for rejecting God, but thankfully God does not leave us there. He has made a way of salvation for you and me. He has made a way of salvation for every single person in all of history, every single person that is living on the face of this planet today, for the six billion people in the world today, God has said, I have made a way of salvation for the lost, and it goes right against this mountain theory of religion that says we have to find our own pathway to God. We have to make our way up to God. God at the top of the mountain, us at the bottom making our way up, no, against all that, God says, I have come down the mountain to you, I have made a way of salvation for you."

And the question in our culture today is definitely not, "Why is there not more than one way? Why is there only one way?" The question is when you realized the context of the book of Romans, the question is, why is there anyway at all? We don't deserve the privilege of grace and mercy that God has poured out in His Son Christ, but He has done it. He has done it for you. He has done it for me. He has done it for the people in Africa and Asia and everywhere in between, He has made a way of salvation for the lost. This is the good news. Romans 3:21-26. Memorize that passage. Let it soak into your being. God has presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement. He has shed His blood so that you cannot be condemned. So you could say later in Romans 8, there is now no condemnation. God has made a way of salvation for the lost.

People cannot come to God apart from Christ.

Affirmation number six, based on this and what Paul says after this, people cannot come to God apart from Christ. People cannot come to God apart from Christ. Now, let that soak in for a second. If you look in Romans 3:27-31, you will see Paul begin to talk about boasting. And he said, "[Boasting] is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith" (Rom. 3:27). Now listen to this verse, verse 28, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (Rom. 3:28).

So we are not justified before God. We are not saved from our sins before God by what we do, by observing the law. No, we are saved by faith. Faith in what? Faith always have to have an object, you can't just make up faith and have faith. You have to have faith in something. And that's what he just said and what he builds on after this, it's faith in Christ. It's faith in what Christ did on the cross and His resurrection from the grave, when you trust in Christ, when you place your faith in Him, you can come to a relationship with God, but apart from that kind of faith, no matter how good you are, no matter how moral of a person you are, no matter how many things you do, you cannot come to God, only through faith, people cannot come to God apart from faith in Christ.

And as we think about what happens to people who never hear about Jesus, this is a very, very big question. Because, and I'll be honest. I'm right here and what I am about to say, when we hear this question, we begin to think, "Maybe, God would make another way. If there's over a billion people who haven't even heard the name of Jesus, then maybe, somehow, maybe God has made another way for them to come to Him apart from Christ. If God is gracious and God is loving, then certainly He would make another way, right?"

And that's a real question and it's a question worth struggling with, but I want you to think about it, as you struggle with that question. As soon as we come to the point and this is happening all over the church today... As soon as we come to the point where we say, "Maybe God would make another way." Then we say to Jesus on the cross, "Thank you for what you did, but it wasn't necessary, we could have found another way."

That is a dangerous place to be. I want you to see that our answer to this question may just throw the whole necessity of the cross in the air. Because here's the deal, if they could come to God apart from Christ, then why did Christ have to die? For anyone of us here who walks out of here and says, "Well, people who haven't heard the name of Jesus can get to God another way, then we are saying, Christ, your death was not all we needed. Christ, thanks for what you did, we could have found another way ourselves." This question is so packed theologically and it's so important that we realize the ramifications of what we believe.

So we had some good news for a second there, but things have gotten pretty dismal, pretty bleak again, because if people cannot come to God apart from faith in Christ then you still

got over a billion people who haven't heard the name of Jesus and that's where we come to our final affirmation.

Christ commands the church to make the gospel known to all peoples.

Affirmation number seven, Christ commands the church, doesn't call, Christ commands the church to make the gospel known to all peoples. Christ commands the church to make the gospel known to all peoples. I want you to see this with me over in Romans 10. Turn with me over there. We won't read all these verses, verses 5 through 15, basically, let me just kind of give you the context here.

Paul is talking about how faith in Christ, faith in Jesus has come to replace faith in God. That when you place your faith in Christ, that is placing your faith in God and that's how we are saved, speaking particularly to these Jewish people.

Now, I want you to come with me to verse 12. And I want you to look at what Paul says. Remember, Christ commands the church to make the gospel known to all peoples. Verse 12, Romans 10, *"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for"—it's a verse worth underlining, memorizing—"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 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? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"* (Rom. 10:12-15).

Now, Paul asks a series of questions here. "How can they believe, call on the one they haven't believed in. And believe if they haven't heard and how can they hear without someone preaching and how can they preach unless they are sent." And these questions, and what Paul is doing, he is describing the plan of God to make the gospel known to all peoples. This is the mission. This is the mission that I believe is unstoppable. From cover to cover in Scripture. God making His gospel, His goodness, His greatness known among all peoples.

The question I want to ask though is where is the break down in this mission? Where is the break down in this mission? And in order to ask that question what I want you to do is, kind of take a journey from the back to the front of this passage we just read. And I want you to think about God's plan.

Let's follow the verbs from the back of what we just read to the front, and I think we will get a picture of what God's plan is for making the gospel known among all peoples. What does it say there at the very end? Verse 15, *"how can they preach unless they are sent?"* So this is where it starts, Christ sends His servants. This is where the plan begins. Christ is sending people, servants, you and me to make the gospel known. So, Christ sends His servants.

And what it says there is, *"how can they preach unless they are sent?"* So when Christ sends servants, what do the servants do? They preach. Now, this isn't just for the guys who stand behind the podium or stand in front of the whole group, this is a word in the New Testament that means proclaim the gospel. It's a word that applies to all of us that have a relationship with Christ. Not just for the vocational preachers, this is for all of us. Christ sends His servants and the servants do what? Live good lives? Be nice people? Well, yes, certainly those things, but they preach. They share the gospel, verbally proclaim the gospel.

What happens when His servants preach? What does it say? *"How can they hear without someone preaching to them?"* So obviously, when Christ sends servants, the servants preach, people hear. People begin to hear the gospel. Many of them for the first time.

And what does the Bible say before that? *"How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?"* Don't miss it, when Christ sends servants and those servants preach and people here, many who hear will believe. Now obviously not all who hear, but I believe this is a promise from Scripture. You go to the Han. You go to the Bengali, I guarantee you, I believe based on the authority of Scripture that when we share the Word of Christ with them, when we share the gospel there will be people who when they hear, they will believe. And they will embrace this message because it's unstoppable.

Because we know that all of eternity is headed to a day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess from every nation and every tribe and every people and they will sing praises to Christ. Men and women have the confidence, you go to people and you share the gospel, there will be many that when they hear, they will believe.

Now what happens when they believe, what will they do? *"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?"* So when they believe, they call. So here is the progression, Christ and servants, servants preach. When they preach, people hear. When they hear, they believe. When they believe they call. Those people who believe will call on the name of the Lord and the guarantee is that for every single person in all the world who calls on the name of the Lord what will happen? He will be saved. He will be saved.

Christ sends servants that preach the gospel when they preach, people hear. When they hear, they believe. When those that believe call, they will be saved, guaranteed, that is the outline. That is God's plan for making the gospel known to all peoples. Now, the question is where is the breakdown in this mission?

Think about it with me. Is the breakdown here when they call, will they be saved? Yes, no doubt, that is a guaranteed. When they believe, no doubt, they will call. When they hear, no doubt, many of them will believe in Christ. When we preach, unless we are preaching in a room by ourselves, which really doesn't make a lot of sense, people are going to hear. When we preach, they will hear. And undoubtedly, Christ is sending servants. So where is the breakdown?

When the servants who have been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ fail to preach this gospel to all nations. Please hear my loud and clear. This is God's plan. It is plan A for taking the gospel to all nations. And there is no plan B. There is not a plan B. You don't see it anywhere in Scripture.

Sure, people might say, "Well, doesn't God have the power to make this gospel known to them in other ways?" Undoubtedly, God would write it in the sky in clouds. He could write out the gospel. He could go through the whole Roman Road in the clouds, no question. He could do that. He has the power to do that. He has the power to reveal himself in dreams and visions, which He is in many particularly Muslim areas in our world today. There are testimonies about God revealing Himself in dreams and visions, but can I remind you that when you read the book of Acts you will not find one verse, not one verse where the gospel goes to the nations apart from the testimony of servants of Christ.

What about Cornelius? He sees a vision, right? What does God do? He calls Peter. He says, "Get up and go and tell him what this means. Tell him about the gospel." Throughout the book of Acts, there is only one way that the gospel goes to the nations and it's through men

and women, boys and girls who are proclaiming the truth in Jesus Christ, who are taking this responsibility to teach and really giving themselves to it. That is God's plan A and there is no plan B.

And so I say to you, the biblical truth that I pray that God will bring home in our hearts is this, God's desire for The Church at Brook Hills is not to sit around on a Sunday morning to answer this question. God's desire for this church is to alleviate the question all together.

My interest is in no way to have debates over what happens to people who never hear about Jesus. That is not my purpose. My purpose is not just for us to have a good theological discussion on a Sunday morning. My purpose is for you under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to see this question and to feel it's weight and to feel it's gravity and to begin to think in your life, how can we at this church be a part of alleviating this question all together so that we don't have to sit around and think about what happens to people who never hear about Jesus because we know those billion people have heard His name.

And I know what you are thinking, "Dave, once again you are getting a little idealistic on us. How can we at The Church at Brook Hills really impact hundreds and hundreds of millions of people with the gospel?" And it's a good question. And I want you to notice that around Rome, you see Jerusalem and Sidon. That represents the regions that were known to contain Christians at the beginning of Paul's ministry.

That's the regions that were known to contain the gospel. People had heard the gospel, received the gospel, believed in the gospel at the beginning of Paul's ministry. Now what I want to do is show you the regions that were shown to contain Christians by the end of Paul's ministry. That's pretty significant increase, isn't it?

Now, obviously, I'm not saying Paul was the only one sharing the gospel during that time, there were a lot of people doing it, but I tell you, with all my heart, Paul had a huge impact on this area. The gospel began to go forth. This is the end of Paul's ministry before he died. But what I want you to notice is the far west, Spain. You see, Paul's desire was to get to Spain, but he never made it there. In fact, he was arrested in Jerusalem and he was taken to Rome, but not quite the way he planned. He was in chains. And he never made it to Spain and the end of his life, Spain had never heard the gospel. So, what does this mean? Paul you are a failure. Paul, you were too idealistic. Paul, you gave your life to this purpose, but there were a lot of areas you never got to cover. Why did you even give yourself to that mission?

Before we say Paul is a failure though, I want to show you the regions that were known to contain Christians within two centuries of Paul's death. Look at this with me. Within two centuries after he had died, the gospel had not only infiltrated Spain, but that entire part of the world. And I want to remind you, there was no TV and there was no radio and there was no Internet. It was just men and women who had the gospel in their hearts and they proclaimed it with their mouths. They gave their lives to it.

All right, so the question I have for The Church at Brook Hills is what kind of impact are you going to have on the world? Brothers and sisters do not underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit of God in your life and in the life of this church. When you look at this area, you will see at least 100 people groups who still have no access to the gospel. And I am standing before you to say that I believe with all my heart that God wants to use The Church at Brook Hills to infiltrate this area with the gospel. And he wants to change the face of this area.

He has commanded us to make the gospel known to all nations. God help us to see the need. They haven't even heard His name. There is nothing more important. This is more important, God help us see that this is more important than building a 401K. This is more important than having a nice house, than driving a nice car. It's more important than living a nice comfortable life.

They haven't even heard His name. And the question I want to ask you is are you in? Students, teenagers, you've got your life sitting before you, your plans, your dreams; your ambitions are you in? Are you willing to say, my entire life is going to be directed at one passion, making the gospel known among all peoples, are you in? Those of you who are sitting, wondering sometimes with your arms folded, "What does the church really have for me? What really can I do as a part of this church?" Are you going to rise up and say, I want in on this mission? Wives, husbands, homemakers, business men, businesswomen, are you in? Are you willing to sacrifice the pleasures of this world in order to say, I'm going to make the gospel known in all nations no matter what it costs me and no matter what it costs my family. Grandparents, are you in? Grandparents, are you willing to sit up and be a model for us of what it means to use the last years of your life to make the gospel known in all nations? Are you in?

God help us not to be a church that sits back and lives like these millions of people are okay without hearing the name of Jesus Christ. I want to give you some practical ways for you to say, "I'm in."

Practical way number one, I want you to see how the Gideon's are making the gospel accessible to people around the world through giving copies of the Bible and you will notice on there that at about the cost of about five dollars apiece you can send Bibles that will be spread out over 175 countries. And as we prayed and thought through what we were going to look at in God's Word, I wanted you to have a practical way to say, right now, I have a way to make this gospel known in other nations. And so, I want to invite you to pray right now and say, "God, how can I make the gospel known in other nations through giving so that the Word is put in other people's hands?" I am a fan of sending the Bible to be in the hands of people around the world. And I think it's something worth challenging ourselves to give too. I want you to be praying for the people that are going to hear the Word of God because you have given and praying as a family, "God, we want to be a part of making the gospel known in all nations."

And I want to give you an opportunity to respond that way. At the same time, I want to give you an opportunity in saying, "You know, in my life; I need to begin to wrestle with how I am going to make the gospel known in all nations." And as a church family to say, "Whether I am a student, whether I am a teenager or a senior adult or anywhere in between, I want to begin to really look at how my life can make the gospel known among people who have never heard the name of Jesus."

And if you want in on that, and you would say, I need to make some changes in my life and I need to begin to think about how I can be in. I want to invite you to say, "I'm in. I just want you to know that I'm in and I want to be a part of The Church of Brook Hills making the gospel known among all nations."

I know that in this room, there are some people who are sitting here who stand before God condemned because you have never placed your faith in Christ and I want you to know, His grace for you is free. It is real. It is personal and if you have never placed your faith in Christ, I want to invite you to say, "I want to place my faith in Christ." And today, your life,

just like we have talked about people overseas, can be turned upside down for all of eternity because God has made a way of salvation for you.

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