

The Charge
Romans 10:13-15
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My name is Rob Gicking. I'm the director of youth and families here. It's my honor to be up here with you preaching this morning. This is actually my first time ever preaching, and so now would be a good time to start praying. But we've been going through a series on "The Qualities of a Disciple," and we are now on the eighth quality, which is to confess Christ. And so let's read this passage together, and then we're going to dive in and unpack this one step at a time.

Our passage this morning is Romans 10:13-15.

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" [ESV]

This is the word of the Lord.

So as I said, we are looking at the eighth quality today, confessing Christ. And the title of the sermon is called "The Charge." And I'm going to get to that in a second. But our passage is a short passage this morning, but within these three verses, Paul paints a picture of the process by which saving faith comes to disciples. Before we dive into the passage, I want to explain the title of the sermon so that you can play along.

At the end of every worship service, our church recites the charge. We receive the charge. We take the charge. It's a short exhortation usually given by pastor Randy or pastor PD, and it calls us to go and do something with what we've just experienced. I believe that this passage in Romans, the eighth quality of a disciple, is a beautiful background to why we do the charge at the end of our service.

Now, our culture is full of different charges, statements that get people fired up. And I thought that I would share a few of my favorites with you now. Get ready, church. "For Narnia!" Not a bad one. "The lights are out, and away we go." That one's for Randy. That's formula one. "Let's play ball." For some of you, this will bring up happiness and sadness at the same time. "Unleash the fury," like the Washington Capitals who are playing terribly, by the way. I have to say this one carefully because this is on the Internet, and I don't want us to get sued. "Ready to rumble, let's get." All right. You guys following me? "Are you ready for some football?" This one's my favorite, and I was so excited to bring this one to you. "Boogity boogity boogity, let's go racing!" It's NASCAR, right? We're not far from Carroll County where I grew up. Well, I know what a NASCAR is. You guys can Google it later. "Now for wrath, now for ruin, and the red dawn!" For my *Lord of the Rings* fans. And "We must protect this house." Under Armor, which is a Baltimore company. University of Maryland Terrapin, by the way, Kevin Plank, "Fear the turtle."

These charges get us fired up. They are cried out at a moment of stillness, and people are fired up over it. The crowd cheers louder. The excitement grows intensely. The moment is set. And for some of you, just hearing these words beckons back incredible memories of your glory days in high school sports. Or maybe it was the time you watched that amazing play of your favorite team with some of your favorite people. Charges are powerful. In a brief statement, our energy is focused in on a singular task and goal.

And I believe that's exactly what God has in store for us this morning as we look at Paul's letter to the Romans.

So turning now to our text, I want us to focus on three key terms because although the entire passage is important, I'd like for you to be home by lunch. And so the three principles we're going to look at closely today are confessing, sending, and proclaiming. Confessing, sending, and proclaiming. Now, these words may not appear directly in your text, but they are the core ideas that Paul is fleshing out for us in this passage. And as we look at each of them together, we see the process of salvation, the task given to those who are saved, and the role of Christians living in this world.

So let's start by looking at confessing. We see in verse 13, "For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Now, you may notice this is in quotes because Paul is quoting. He's quoting from Joel 2:32. Joel is in the middle of a prophesy regarding the wrath of God to be poured out on the nation of Israel. And Joel throws out, because God calls him to throw out, this very important phrase, that anyone and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

It's a continuation of a thought process Paul has begun at the beginning of the chapter, and it involves the verses that are most often quoted from this chapter. That "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." These are verses 9 and 10. Without true faith and confession of Christ, no one can be a disciple. Without calling on the Lord, no one can be saved. It is the fundamental, core, primary requirement of any disciple, that they acknowledge their need for the redemptive work of Christ and His exclusive power to provide that work. There is no other way. And as we look at the qualities of a disciple, it's important to recognize the requirement of becoming a disciple.

Now this is one of the most basic understandings of scripture, isn't it? However, it's also one of the things we seem to get most backwards in our daily lives. You see, Paul is writing about the Jews in this chapter. Specifically, he's writing and lamenting about the fact that they continued to look to the law of Moses for their salvation. You see, they still believe that, somehow, they can earn their salvation by following the law. But here's the issue. The law which is fulfilled in Christ was never meant to give us blueprints for obtaining salvation. It was given to us so that we might see and recognize our need for a savior.

Paul has already said this very clearly earlier in Romans in chapter 3 when he says, "Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by works of the law. Rather, through the law, we become conscious of our sin." So Paul is taking time to remind the believers that the gospel is key to our faith. He's taking time to remind them of the truth of the gospel. Why? Because it is absolutely necessary for salvation, and because it is absolutely necessary for sanctification. The gospel, the good news that Christ has made a way for the forgiveness of sins and has given eternal life to those who believe in Him is just as necessary for our daily sanctification as it is for our salvation. We cannot forget this. We must confess this truth to ourselves daily, even minute by minute, because the second we begin to think and where we begin to forget about the way that our salvation is acquired is the second we begin to think that we had something to do with it. And the second we begin to think that we had something to do with it, we become arrogant and puffed up, and we become ungrateful for the work of God.

Here's why this is so important for us to acknowledge this morning. Because the two points that follow this one on the outline, their foundation is in this. Before I can be sent, before I can preach, I must first confess Christ as my savior. I must first be a disciple who knows my need for Jesus, my need to be with my savior and follow Him and be with Him on a daily basis. You see, this is not a one-time confession. This is an everyday, every moment confession of a Christian, that the same savior I needed at

the time of my conversion is the same savior I need every single day.

I have the distinct pleasure of being mentored by Jim McKee, who's the executive pastor at Chapelgate. We've met every other week for almost three years now, and he is still putting up with me. God be praised. And over the past three years, he's shared many, many things that are of wonderful value to my edification. But there is one thing that he says to me, and it has stuck with me. And he says it all the time, and that's probably why it's stuck with me. But he says, "Rob, you need to preach the gospel to yourself always." You need to preach the gospel to yourself always because it's in the gospel that my freedom is found, and it is in the gospel that my power is found, not mine but His, Jesus Christ. So as Christians and disciples, we need to confess Christ for salvation, and we need to constantly be refreshed by that confession every day because it's only as I allow the gospel to continually work on my heart through the power of the Holy Spirit that my life is transformed. And it's only through the transformation of my life that I have the motivation and the power to do what God is calling us to do next.

So Paul continues on. If salvation comes from believing and confessing Christ as Lord, then who's going to tell them about Jesus? The answer, well, those who are sent. So naturally, we must ask who is it that's sent? Now there is a sense in which Paul is talking about the formal sending of those who are in ministry. The Greek word "apostello" shares a root with the same word that means "apostle." That's not an accident. So yes, in one sense Paul is most likely talking about the formal sending of the apostles, of evangelists, missionaries to spread the good word of the gospel to those who have yet to hear it.

But there is also a more general sense that applies to us in this room today. The more general sense is the one we talk about at the end of every worship service in the charge. In a way, it's a synopsis, a summary of the great commission when Jesus sits before His disciples and says, "Go and make disciples of all nations." You see, "apostello" literally means "to send forth a messenger." Another translation is "to send forth a message." What kind of messenger would not have a message? They're one in the same. Together, we see a picture of what Paul is writing about, that the message is meant to go out. The messenger is meant to go out. It's a picture of commissioning.

Think of Isaiah 6. Isaiah is commissioned by the Lord to go and prophesy to Israel. But before he goes, he realizes that he is a man of unclean lips. Verse 5, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." You see, Isaiah is standing before God, in His glory and His majesty, and it's in this moment that he recognizes his own insufficiency. Think back to point number one. It is the glory of God that fills me with awe and wonder. It is God's beauty that makes me recognize my own failing. It is God's perfection that makes me see my sin. And it's in this moment that Isaiah cries out, "Woe is me!" He acknowledges his utter inability to stand in the presence of the almighty God of the universe. He is literally undone by God's presence. And as he is crying out, "Woe is me!" the seraphim flies over to him, "having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the alter." And he touches Isaiah's mouth with it. "Behold! This has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." It's a commissioning by atonement.

And that is exactly what we must understand about our mission as messengers. Jesus puts this dynamic beautifully in John 15 when He is teaching His disciples, "I am the true vine. You are the branches. Apart from me, you can do nothing." That is why it is so important for us to remember that our sending is first made possible by our confessing. If we do not have the personal relationship with Christ, then we miss the very power of Christ that makes us effective through the Holy Spirit. Not only that, but what motivation would I have? Certainly not a good one. Maybe I'm motivated by self-interest.

As we saw, Paul is addressing this in Thessalonians when he tells the Thessalonians, "By no means did we do any of this for our own good but for you." You saw the way we treated you. You saw the way we acted. It was selfless. It was righteous. It was blameless towards you because it's motivated by

Christ. So we must understand this, that as we have confessed Christ and seen His redemptive work in our lives and experienced the transformational power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives, we must understand that those who follow Christ are sent by Christ into the world, that we are sent to be light in the darkness, that we are sent as a holy priesthood to bring glory to our God and good to all that we come into contact with.

We have been going through the gospel of John in our middle and high school Bible studies over the past semester, and this week, we got to John 20. Now, this is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And He is appearing to His disciples, and He says, "Peace be with you." But He says something else. "As the Father sent me, even so, I am sending you." We're not saved so that we can sit back and enjoy the ride. We're saved, and we are sent. We are messengers, and we have the best message in the world. The same message we revisit for our daily bread is the message we have to carry out into the world. And it is some mystery that God uses us, broken sinners like you and me, to bring forth His message. And we're not sent alone. We're not sent without resource, for we have the Holy Spirit who guides us, and we have the overflow of Christ's love poured out on us because it's the overflow of the love that we experience from God that motivates us to extend that love out into the world.

If you notice on the front of your bulletin every week, we print it. "To experience and extend God's love, God's grace, God's mercy." And the order is very important. I cannot give what I do not have. How can I give love if I have not received love? How can I give grace if I have not experienced grace? And so we say every week that we are a church here to experience God's love and extend it. And how should we extend it? How does Paul say we are to extend? By preaching.

So the final place I want to examine today is this idea of preaching. Literally, the word Paul uses here is "to proclaim." And it is especially tied to the act of proclaiming the gospel, the divine good news of Jesus Christ. So we now take time to look at the application of the passage, the eighth quality of a disciple, that we confess Christ first to ourselves and then to others.

But how do we do this practically? I'm a practical guy. I like action steps, things that I can do. There's two ways that I would challenge you to apply this practically: with your words and with your lives. We can't do one without the other. We need to be people of both word and deed. And as we have already discussed, the very power that fuels us is indeed the restorative work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the transforming us to be more like our older brother. It's the very principle recorded for us in 1 John 4:19, "We love because he first loved us." It's further elaborated in James when he says, "Show me your faith apart from works, and I will show you my faith by my works." The idea here that we would be speaking truth and living truth, speaking grace and living grace, speaking love and living love. If we miss this, we are at great risk of thinking that the reason we are to witness is purely out of obligation when, in fact, for those who have been truly transformed, brought from dead to life, from sin to righteousness, this is an act of worship. We don't proclaim Christ out of duty. We proclaim Christ because we can't not. We don't proclaim Christ out of duty. We proclaim Christ because Christ overflows from His disciples. The very love with which He loved us pours out from us onto those that we come into contact with.

So let me ask you two questions. Are you proclaiming Christ with your words? When was the last time you shared your testimony with someone who didn't already know it? When was the last time you leaned in when your friend or co-worker opened up the door for you to do so? When was the last time you actually told someone about Jesus Christ? How will they know if you don't tell them?

Are you proclaiming Christ with your life? Does your life look different? Are you known by your love for others? Are you marked by the fruit of the Spirit? Are the works of your life distinctly different than everyone else in our independent self-infused culture? Is your walk with the Lord on display and evident for all to see? Or are we a people who are too busy worrying about our own lives to have eyes for

those around us? Are we so caught up in the American dream and building our own little kingdoms that we have no concern for the very neighbors that God puts in our path?

Because here is the thing. If we're not sharing with our words and proclaiming with our lives the gospel to others, it's because we have either not experienced the love of Christ ourselves or because we have become spiritual gluttons, content to sit back and consume without ever being part of the process of salvation for others. And if you, like me, have read this passage, and as we have talked through it and began to understand, if you feel the weight of guilt on you, know this. Our God forgives. Peter had many opportunities on the night that Jesus was betrayed to confess Christ, and He did not. And yet Jesus restores Peter. You've had many opportunities, maybe even this week, to share the gospel with others. And maybe you did and maybe you didn't. But the same gospel that we confess for our own faith and the same gospel we carry out to others, the same gospel we preach to ourselves rings true here. That even in our failure, the Lord loves us and forgives us and restores us to go and try again.

You see, we're sent with a message. We are the messengers. We are the sent. We have the message. How will they call on the one that they don't believe in? How will they believe if we don't tell them? We started this whole thing talking about the charge. We don't recite those words as just a form of function, a formality. It's a prayer, and it's a call to action. When we say, "Lord, send us," we're both praying that God would do so and acknowledging our true mission as believers, as disciples to go and make disciples in Columbia and this region and the world. What better way to bring glory to God than to go tell the world of what He has done for us and what He has done for them? What better way to enjoy Him than to be used by Him? I said it's a mystery because it is.

We take charges as athletes to go on the field. And you know who goes on the field? It's the starters. And do you know how they got to be starters? Because they're better than the others. But not so in the kingdom of heaven, for God uses what is foolish in this world to shame the wise. That's us. We are called to go display not the ways in which we have obtained righteousness but the ways that we have acquired it as a gift from God so that others may believe and become part of the feast.

As I was praying this morning, God reminded me of the parable of the wedding feast, and the banquet host sends out his servants to invite the people he's invited. And they're all busy, too busy to come to the feast. And then what does he tell them to do? "Then go out in the streets. And if someone is there, and they have a free opening in their schedule and might like some food, you bring them in, and you invite them."

We live in a dark and hungry world. Paul is writing this about this Jews, and I told you the Jews are still looking to the law to earn their salvation, and he's telling them it just can't be. And what I would maybe say to us is that our current community, they're not looking to the law to earn salvation. They're looking to anything and everything to bring meaning to their life. They want an identity, and so they work really hard, and they build up a career. They want safety, and so they earn extra money so they feel independent and without need. They want meaning, and so they look to their children to provide them with meaning, that if their kids turn out all right, then they've had a good life. And that is meaning to them. And there are people all around us who are headed down a path for destruction, the same path that you and I were on before somebody else told us about the gospel.

Christians, brothers and sisters, disciples, you have confessed Christ for your own heart. You have been sent by the Lord, empowered by the Spirit. So go and proclaim Christ to others because by doing so, you bring much needed healing and balm and hope into this broken world. And that makes you the one with the beautiful feet because you bring good news in the midst of hopelessness. So my hope for you this morning is that through worship and through the reading of God's word and through the exhortations that you receive, that you would experience God's love in a new way. Because it's as you

experience His love and it transforms your heart that you are empowered, motivated, and driven to extend it to your neighbor, to your friend, to your family, your co-worker, maybe even to the person who checks your bags at the grocery store.

But let me tell you something. God plans to use you to bring others into His kingdom. What a blessing. The quality of a disciple doesn't even cut it. This is the overflow of our savior, that although we have been loved so much, we can't help but extend that love to others. Let me pray for us.

Dear Lord, we come before you now amazed. We also come before you now broken, Father, for we see the ways that we do not live up to this call. Father, perhaps we rely too much on tact, or maybe we're looking for the right opportunity or the open window, or whatever it might be. But Lord, I ask that you would reveal yourself to us in ways that transform our hearts that we can't ignore the urging in our own heart to tell others about you, about your glory, about your love. Lord, for we do not know who out there needs to hear your words. But Father, we know that we are called to tell them. Lord, encourage this church to be a witness, to be a light in the darkness of Columbia, Father, to be salt and light in their offices, and in their homes, and in their neighborhoods. Father, that you would work through these sons and daughters to bring your name to bear, your goodness to bear in this community. Father, that we would be a people marked by your love, so transformed by your love for us that we can't help but to talk about it to everyone who will listen. Regardless of their response, Lord, may we be a people who are sent and who from our own confession of you proclaim your name to the world. Amen.