

WHY SHOULDN'T CHRISTIANS JUST MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS?  
ROMANS 10:14-21

**BIG IDEA:** Christians can't just mind their own business because the Bible says the telling the Gospel is their core business.

- I. BECAUSE OF THE NEED OF THE WORLD--Do You See a "Plan B" Here? (or anywhere in the Bible?) **Verse 14**, "*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?*"
1. One of the arguments of the inclusivists, is that there is enough information about God in nature and human conscience (general revelation) to get a person saved.
    - ❑ **Psalm 19:1**, *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.*
    - ❑ **Romans 1:20**, *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.*
  2. Here's my question: If general revelation is enough for people to get saved, why is **Romans 10:14**, so insistent on the need for a preacher? Look at **Verse 17**: *faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.* There is no hint here that people can get saved aside from hearing about Jesus Christ. And this is from the same man who wrote about General Revelation in chapter 1. Here's why: General Revelation is enough to condemn you, but not enough to save you. General Revelation is enough to make you realize you have a problem, but not enough to provide you with the solution. Did you catch how **Romans 1:20** ended? *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 can respond to the light they have and be saved] so that men are without excuse.*
  3. OK, if someone held a gun to my head and asked if God could get people saved in some dark corner of the worlds without a missionary ever coming to them.... Who am I to say what God can or cannot do? If God wanted to, He could write John 3:16 in the bark of a tree in the language of that isolated native. After all, He wrote the Ten Commandments on a couple of rocks! However, the message of the Bible says that that is not normative. The norm is for God to send missionary preachers to tell people about Jesus.
  4. *The noted atheistic philosopher Bertrand Russell was once asked, "If you met God after you die, what will you say to Him to justify your unbelief?"*  
*"I will tell Him that He did not give me enough evidence," Russell snapped.<sup>1</sup>*
  5. Sorry, Russell, that won't work on God.
  6. Back to the core question: What about those who haven't heard?
    - ❑ How did they get ignorant?
      - We need to remember that all peoples came from the first human family. That first family did know about the true God. All peoples who don't know about God are a product of the willful rebellion of ancestors who turned their backs on God. This turning from God has always been the tendency of mankind.
      - The children of Haiti live with the ecological devastation caused when their ancestors cut down all the trees. That's not God's fault. The children of Haiti also live with the spiritual devastation caused when their ancestors dedicated their country to the Devil. That's not God's fault either.
      - **St. Augustine** wrote in *The City of God*, *Adam himself lies now scattered on the whole surface of the earth. Formerly concentrated in one place, he*

<sup>1</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, Word Publishing, Nashville, 2000, 47.

*has fallen; having been broken to pieces, as it were, he has filled the universe with his debris.*

- And by the way, this lost adamic debris isn't confined to backwater places like Papua New Guinea. It has fallen even in the United States. I have met people in the Lobby of our church who tell me that this is the first time they have ever set foot in a church. There are people in America who know the name of Jesus only as an expletive and have never heard a credible explanation of the Gospel. The "Never-heard" problem is not just over there. It's right here in our own country!
- Doesn't God care about these people?
  - He sent His Son to die for them.
  - He sends us to tell them about His Son.
  - He finishes what He starts. If God begins to open the heart of a person in the remotest, darkest corner of the world, He is fully capable of getting the truth of Jesus to that person.
- The idea of the "God-seeking savage" may have some merit, but is often overplayed. For instance, Adoniram Judson landed as a missionary to Burma in 1817. It took him 7 years before he won his first convert among the Burmese Buddhists.<sup>2</sup>
- On the other hand, there is the incredible account of the headhunting Wa people in eastern Burma. One day about a hundred years ago a tribesman named Pu Chan saddled a pony *and told his disciples to follow it in search of a "white brother bearing the book of Siyeh, the True God."*

*The pony led those amazed disciples over approximately 200 miles of mountainous trails and down into the city of Kengtung. Then it turned into the gate of a mission compound and headed straight for a well....*

*The Wa tribesmen heard sounds in the well. They looked inside it and saw no water [it was still being dug] but only two clear blue eyes looking up at them....*

*"Hello, strangers!" The voice...echoed out of the well. "May I help you?"*

*William Marcus Young climbed out of the well....the Wa messengers asked, "Have you brought a book of God?" Young nodded. The Wa men, overcome with emotion, fell at his feet and blurted out the message from Pu Chan. Then they added: "This pony is saddled especially for you. Our people are all waiting. Fetch the book! We must be on our way!"*

Young couldn't go with them, but he and the Christian Lahu tribespeople taught the Gospel to the Wa messengers and sent them back to their own people. Soon there were 10,000 baptized Wa converts.<sup>3</sup>
- If that account seems incredible to you, Richardson has 2 questions for you: *Does anyone doubt that God could cause a pony to lead those Wa men so unerringly over so great a distance? Surely the God who used a **star** to lead the Magi to the manger in Bethlehem could use a mere pony to find a certain well in Kengtung?* PS: As part of his research of this story, Richardson traveled to Mentone, CA to visit the retired missionary grandson of William Marcus Young. His name was Vincent, then 80 years old. He showed Don old photos of the pony and photos of hundreds of Wa people being baptized with thousands watching from the surrounding hillsides.<sup>4</sup>
- Think of the Book of Acts.
  - When a **Roman centurion** named Cornelius needed to hear the Gospel, God sent Peter to him to share the truth about Jesus. And the man was saved, along with his whole household. But he wasn't saved until Peter told him about Jesus.
  - When an **Ethiopian eunuch** needed to hear about Jesus, God sent Philip to meet him on a desert road. After he heard about Jesus, he believed and was baptized.

<sup>2</sup> Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, Regal Books, Ventura, CA, 1981, 92.

<sup>3</sup> Richardson, 102-103.

<sup>4</sup> Richardson, 104

- In Acts 19, Paul met some disciples of John the Baptist's message of repentance in Ephesus. You would never find 12 more sincere seekers in the world than these men. Paul asked them about Jesus. They'd never heard of Jesus. But as soon as Paul explained Jesus to them, they believed and were baptized. It was right then that the Holy Spirit came on them. Sincerity didn't get them the Holy Spirit. Faith in the name of Jesus did.
- In some cultures, there has been no evidence of a Cornelius-type person who was prepared by God and was hungry for the message of the true God. In other cultures, there have been Cornelius-type seekers. *"But truth has not come to them through a supernatural revelation but through the sending of missionaries with the gospel. The contact has been normal and natural and in the God-ordained and divinely appointed way. Instead of granting the unregenerated heart some supernatural revelation, God has brought them under the hearing of the Gospel of Christ and they have been saved."*<sup>5</sup>

II. BECAUSE OF THE BEAUTY OF "GOSPELLING" **VERSE 15**, *And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

1. Quote from **Isaiah 52:7**, *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*
2. True beauty needs no justification.
  - God's proliferation of beauty in creation. It seems wasteful, but God sees no need to justify it.
  - Cf. **Matthew 26:6-13**, *While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, <sup>7</sup> a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. <sup>8</sup> When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "**Why this waste?**" they asked. <sup>9</sup> "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." <sup>10</sup> Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done **a beautiful thing** to me. <sup>11</sup> The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup> When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. <sup>13</sup> I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done **will also be told, in memory of her.**"*
  - What the world devalues, indeed scorns and hates, is the delight of the angels, will be rewarded by God, and will be told around heavenly campfires throughout all eternity.
3. What is the essential beauty of evangelism?
  - **NOTE:** Feet really aren't all that beautiful. Particularly the feet of missionaries. They probably have blisters, calluses, bunions, and are dirt-stained.
    - This is an example of **metonymy**—using a connected but lesser thing to represent the larger thing, e.g., speaking of a the "scepter" to refer to the "king" or speaking of "counting heads" to refer to "counting people." Here the "feet" represent the "missionaries."
  - There is the beauty of the creation of life out of deadness.
    - **Ephesians 2:4-5** *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.*
    - There is the beauty of a heart-cracking twist in the story that we love to hear.
      - The pauper becomes a prince.
      - The ugly duckling becomes a swan.
      - Susan Boyle brings tears to judges' and viewers' eyes

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<sup>5</sup> (Quote from Harold Lindsell's *A Christian Philosophy of Missions*, in J. Oswald Chambers, *How Lost Are the Heathen?*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1972, 75)

- “**Britain’s Got Talent star Susan Boyle won't get makeover says Amanda Holden**” 17/04/2009  
*A week ago nobody beyond the residents in a cluster of Scottish villages had heard of Susan Boyle. But her electrifying Britain’s Got Talent audition last weekend changed all that. There have now been an astonishing 20 million internet hits around the world to see the performance that blew away the judges and audience on the ITV1 show. And yesterday she won millions more US fans when she again belted out Les Miserables show-stopper I Dreamed A Dream via satellite on the CBS Early Show. The unmarried, unemployed cat-lover, known as the Hairy Angel, also featured on NBC’s Today Show where presenter Kathie Lee had to dry her eyes with a sock being used for the next segment. Demi Moore is also said to have been moved to tears and Susan has been lined up for The Oprah Winfrey Show.*<sup>6</sup>
- “Susan: My Love Hope” April 18, 2009, By COLIN ROBERTSON  
 BRITAIN’S Got Talent star Susan Boyle has 34 million YouTube fans — but last night she was still waiting for one to ask her out on a date. And the Scottish songbird, who became a worldwide star after last week’s show, admitted she had never even **HEARD** of the video website.  
 The 48-year-old turned in an amazing performance of show tune I Dreamed A Dream last Saturday.<sup>7</sup>

### III. BECAUSE GOD HOLDS US RESPONSIBLE [VERSES 14B-15]

NOTE: “A student once asked C. H. **Spurgeon** if he thought the heathen who had never heard the gospel would be saved. The great preacher answered, ‘It is more a question with me whether we who have the gospel and fail to give it to those who have not, can be saved.’”

1. **Matt Friedeman** was on a TV panel discussing community problems in Jackson, Mississippi. The city council president and another councilman were on their way to jail for re-zoning back-room deals. *The panel moderator looked at me and asked, “Matt, whose fault is all this?.... One of the panelists sitting next to me was a gentleman named John Perkins....Before I could respond, Perkins answered, “It’s my fault.” All heads turned his way. He elaborated. “I have lived in this community for decades as a Bible teacher. I should have been able to create an environment where what our council president did would have been unthinkable because of my efforts. You want someone to blame? I’ll take the blame. All of it.”*<sup>8</sup>
2. Here is my role and your role in **Romans 10:14**, *And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”*
  - Some of us are supposed to be preachers.  
 This kind of preaching is not precisely the typical Sunday morning sermon—Lit., **Heralding**= *karusso*: (1) denoting the official activity of a herald *announce, publicly proclaim* (RV 5.2); (2) *make known extensively, tell everywhere* (MK 5.20); (3) in a religious sense, denoting proclamation of a sacred message *proclaim, preach, publish* (MT 4.23); (4) as proclaiming the necessity of a course of action *preach* (MK 1.4)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mirror.co.uk/celebs/news/2009/04/17/britain-s-got-talent-star-susan-boyle-won-t-get-makeover-says-amanda-holden-115875-21283622/> Accessed 041709

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/showbiz/tv/article2382877.ece>. Accessed 041709

<sup>8</sup> (“To Illustrate,” *Leadership*, Winter 2002, 73)

- ❑ **MORRIS:** *His verb properly denotes the action of a herald, someone who was given a message and told to proclaim it. The notion of a higher authority is implicit in the concept: a self-appointed herald is a contradiction in terms. Paul is saying that the preaching of the Christian message is impossible without the divine commission.* (390)
  - ❑ **NOTE:** This is grammatically double good news: Lit in NAU, <sup>NAU</sup> **Romans 10:15** *How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"* [agatha explained by **MORRIS:** *It emphasizes the goodness of the good news.*
  - ❑ And the rest of us are supposed to be senders of preachers. Take a look at one of those offering envelopes right there in front of you. Look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> line down. That's one way you can be a sender of preachers. If you haven't already done so, why don't you write a number on that blank line, and put a check or cash in the envelope and put it in the offering basket this morning?
3. It was 1906 and 20-year-old James Fraser was doing well in college, planning a career in engineering. Then a friend gave him a little pamphlet. It said, *If our Master returned today to find millions of people unevangelized, and looked, as of course he would look, to us for an explanation, I cannot imagine what explanation we should have to give.*  
*Of one thing I am certain – that most of the excuses we are accustomed to make with such good conscience now, we shall be wholly ashamed of then.*<sup>9</sup>  
 Fraser accepted the challenge and became a missionary to the Lisu tribe in China. He died there of malaria **8 years younger [in year 2009]** than I am today, but saw more than 60,000 Lisu baptized as believers in Jesus Christ in his 27 years as the "apostle to the Lisus."<sup>10</sup>
4. James Fraser (1886-1938) was a British Protestant Christian missionary to China with the China Inland Mission. He pioneered work among the Lisu people of Southwestern China in the early part of the 20th century.  
*Initial success was followed by years of doubt and difficulty until 1916 when he and fellow missionaries started to see scores of families convert to Christianity and enthusiastically pursue a new life without the fear of the spirits that had previously characterised them. By 1918, sparked by family evangelism carried on by the people themselves, 60,000 believers had been baptized. Fraser was known for his ability to organize the people into strong indigenous churches that became models for church-planting ventures not only for other minority peoples in China's southwest but in other countries as well.*  
**This quote from the OMF website November 2005:**  
*"On September 25, 1938, while in Baoshan Yunnan, China, James Fraser died at the age of 52. Due to land erosion, West Yunnan's Christian church decided to move the grave from the mountain slopes of Baoshan to this location, renewing the headstone on behalf of the Lisu church as a way of expressing their cherished memory of J.O. Fraser. Fraser's life has reaped a large harvest although many tears had first to be sown through his labours.*  
*"The Lisu church at Baoshan plans to commemorate J.O. Fraser every seven years at a special Easter service in the new Bible training center they have started there. Another memorial to J.O. Fraser has been erected by Lisu believers in Weixi County in far northwestern Yunnan. Inscribed in Lisu, Chinese and English the English reads: "IN LOVING MEMORY. JAMES O. FRASER 1886-1938. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. WITH DEEPEST LOVE REMEMBER YOU ALWAYS—THE LISU CHURCH." The Chinese states additionally: "Erected by the Christian Church in the Lisu Autonomous County of Weixi on 15 March 2004."<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>9</sup> (Mountain Rain, 3-4)

<sup>10</sup> James and Marti Hefley, *By Their Blood*, Mott Media, Milford, MI, 1979, 60

<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia

IV. BECAUSE IF “THEY” DON’T WANT IT, SOMEBODY ELSE WILL. **VERSES 16-21**, *But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” [Isaiah 53:1]* <sup>17</sup> *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.* <sup>18</sup> *But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” [Psalm 19:4]* <sup>19</sup> *Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; [Morris: Suggestive of Hosea’s Lo-ammi, “not my people”] I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” [Deut. 32:21]”* <sup>20</sup> *And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” Isaiah 65:1]* <sup>21</sup> *But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” [Isaiah 65:2]*

1. QUOTES:

- **Verse 16 is from Isaiah 53:1** *Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*
- **Verse 18 is from Psalm 19:1-4** *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. <sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,*
- **Verse 19 is from Deuteronomy 32:21**, *They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.*
- **Verses 20 is from Isaiah 65:1**, *“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.*
- **Verse 21 is from Isaiah 65:2**, *‘ <sup>2</sup> All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations--*

2. And thus, by Israel’s rejection of the Gospel, we Gentiles got to hear and we have become saved.

3. **Dawson Trotman**, *Never talk to anyone about the Gospel against his will [but you can pray!]*

4. **Joe Aldrich**: *Look for the schooling fish!*

5. **ILLUSTRATION**: Two different sales people were sent to a primitive country of barefoot people—The first wired back home to his company, “Send me a plane ticket because nobody here wears shoes.” The second wired back, “Send me ten cases of shoes because everybody here needs shoes.”

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