

November 9/10, 2013

## How Did We Get Here?

**Romans 10:13-15**

Pastor Clint Kirby

**Pastor Jeff Petersen:** It is once again a joy this week for me to have the opportunity to introduce our speaker. It was just over four years ago that Clint and Missy Kirby left and headed to Gdansk, Poland, to be where Clint is our Team Leader for our first church-planting team that we sent out from Lincoln Berean. And he is now also the pastor of Gospel Church Gdansk, which is the church that God has used all of us together to plant in that city. And so it is just a great joy to have him with us this weekend, to have both of them here. And Clint is not only a great leader and a key part of our ministry team, but he has become for me a dear friend, so I'm really thankful to have him back with us. Also, God has been doing some really cool things to continue to open doors of opportunity in Poland, and one of the ones that just took place a week or so ago was that through a unique series of circumstances, God put Clint and Missy on national TV in Poland in this long interview on a show that would be the equivalent of our *Good Morning America*. It's all in Polish, so you can't understand it, but as Clint comes up to share, we wanted to show you just a little clip of that as he comes.

*(Video clip)*

**Clint Kirby:** Just to translate, we were talking about who would win the Big Ten this year. I said Nebraska and she was an Ohio State fan. *(laughter)* Well, good morning. It's good to be with you this morning, and this morning I want to ask us the question: *How did you get here today?* Now the answer to that question in America is a little different than what the answer would be in Poland. In Poland, when we gather for church, people might take a bus or a tram or a train, and may even walk. But of course America is a huge country, so most of us used a car to get here. But I'm guessing there might be a handful of y'all who maybe walked, maybe even rode your bike. But even if we took different forms of transportation this morning, I would suggest to you that we all got here today the exact same way. Now I'm not talking about transportation. I'm talking about something else. *How did we get here?* And once we understand *how* we got here, what does that mean for our lives? What does that mean for our friends and for our families? Well, that's what we're going to look at this morning, so if you have a Bible, please turn with me to Romans, Chapter 10. Now that probably sounds a little familiar, since y'all spent the better part of last year walking through the book of Romans. If you weren't here for that series, I would encourage you to grab the audio and listen to that. But this morning we're going to zoom in on a few verses that have broad applications for all of us here this morning. But before we zoom in, I want to remind you of the context of Romans chapter 10.

In the previous chapter, in Romans chapter 9, we're amazed by God's sovereignty in salvation. The Apostle Paul in Romans 9 traces the story of God's sovereign grace through the history of the nation of Israel. Now there are some heavy, heavy verses in Romans chapter 9. In Romans chapter 9 we see that God has mercy upon whom He chooses, that God has compassion upon whom He chooses. And when we understand God's sovereignty in salvation, it can be easy to think, "Well, it doesn't matter what I do, because God is going to do what God is going to do." As Romans 9 says, "Who can resist His will?"

But when we get to chapter 10, we understand that this way of thinking is a mistake. In chapter 10 we see the message of the gospel extended to everyone. Romans chapter 10: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” It says that *all* who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. So in chapter 10 we see how humans are responsible for their actions and choices. So then we’re faced with the question that has bothered people for centuries: How can Romans 9 and Romans 10 both be true at the same time? How can God be completely sovereign, yet human beings are completely responsible? Well, as Bryan said during the series, “I have no idea. I have no idea how both of these things are true, but at the same time, when I read Romans 9 and Romans 10, I see that they *are* true. I want to resolve this tension, but the Bible is okay with this tension. How does it all work? I have no idea.” But this morning I want to zoom in on chapter 10 where we see human responsibility, and I want us to consider a couple of verses from that chapter this morning. Of course Paul has the nation of Israel in mind as he writes this, but certainly these are general truths that apply to all of us today. So, Romans chapter 10, picking it up in verse 13, Paul writes:

**...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?**

(\*NASB, Romans 10:13-15a)

The Apostle Paul lays out a very clear argument in these verses. He starts by stating the end goal: *that people would call on the name of the Lord and be saved.* And then he works backwards to show how we get there. So how do we get there? Well, he writes that in order for someone to call on the name of the Lord, they must first believe in Jesus. But how can they believe in Jesus if they haven’t heard about Him? And how can they hear about Jesus unless someone tells them? And how can someone tell them about Jesus unless they are sent? Now these are all rhetorical questions that beg for the answer, “They can’t!” So let’s read those verses again, and try to answer Paul’s rhetorical questions here.

Question: **How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?**

Answer: They can’t.

Question: **And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?**

Answer: They can’t.

Question: **And how are they to hear without someone preaching?**

Answer: They can’t.

Question: **And how are they to preach unless they are sent?**

Answer: They can’t.

This is the necessary order by which people are saved. Again, in Romans 9 we’re struck by the sovereignty of God in salvation, but in Romans 10 we’re struck by the human responsibility and that the mission of the church involves us. This is why y’all have sent our team to Poland to share the gospel of grace with Polish people who desperately need to hear it. After all, how will they hear it unless someone preaches to them? You know, it’s been quite the journey the past four years. There have been some highs but there have also been some lows, not only in ministry but personally as well. There have been hard days, and early on I can remember a ministry event we planned and we prayed for; we prepped; we got everything to go and it was time for it to launch, and no one showed up. I can remember another time in the early days of Gospel Church when we were gathering on a Sunday and there were only eight of us, and half of that was our team. You know,

back then it was easy to think, “If we just cancelled all of this and left, would anyone notice? Would anyone make a fuss?” There have been hard times, but that has made the good times even sweeter. A couple of weeks ago at Gospel Church, we were singing that worship song, “You are Holy...,” with the echo, and when the ladies started to sing the echo to that song, the room was full of worship. There was this wall of sound, lifting up our Lord and Savior. It was one of those moments where you just step back and thank God for the journey, thank Him that we didn’t just cancel everything and go home. Or just last week, after Gospel Church, after our gathering, just going out to eat with three of my Polish guy-friends, and we sat together and shared a meal together; we laughed together; we talked about parts of the sermon together. To quote the great modern-day American poet Kenny Chesney, “That’s the good stuff.” (*laughter*)

But how would they have ever heard the gospel without y’all sending us, as a church? I’m constantly reminded in Poland that we wouldn’t be there without Lincoln Berean Church, without you. How can a person preach the gospel of Jesus Christ unless they are sent? Now it’s not clear in verse 15 if Paul is talking about being sent by God or being sent by a church, but certainly when we read the New Testament, we can see that both of these things are true. I just want you to know this morning that our team feels so supported by you. And this is felt in so many ways—this is felt in your prayers, through your giving, through your emails, through some of y’all coming to Poland and visiting us. We truly feel like you have our backs, and I just want to say thanks. Thanks for your faithfulness to send.

**How can 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?** Now the logic of these verses is pretty simple; it’s not brain surgery. I think most of us understand that in order for a person to believe in Jesus Christ, they first need to hear about Him. And when we think this through, I think we can all appreciate the need for missions, the need to tell people in other parts of the world about Jesus, who have never heard about Him. If you’re here this morning, there’s a good chance that you already believe all of this, and I’m not telling you anything new. But this is a missions’ weekend, and sometimes when we think about missions, we can think about people who are far, far away. Or maybe when you think about missions, you think about poor countries in other parts of the world. Or maybe when you think about missions, you think about eating strange, maybe gross food. Or maybe when you think about missions, you think about learning another language. Or maybe when you think about missions, you think about missionaries in the world who are being martyred and persecuted for what they have believed. Now all of these things can be aspects in the life of a missionary, but there can be a tendency to think of all of these things as something far, far away, disconnected from the actual world you live in here in Lincoln, Nebraska. Missions can seem far, far away, and while there are missionaries that are far, far away, this morning I would like for us to consider something much, much closer.

At the beginning I said that all of us got here today in the exact same way, but I wasn’t talking about methods of transportation. When I said that all of us got here today in the exact same way, what I meant was that the only reason we are all sitting here today is because of missions. Each one of us is here because people before us took this truth in Romans 10 seriously. People went before us and told others about Jesus. Missions isn’t something that is far, far away. Missions is the only way you heard the gospel. Certainly we find this to be true when we read the New Testament. After Jesus was resurrected and before He was ascended, He sent the disciples out to tell others about Him. He entrusted the gospel message to a group of men who shared it with others...who shared it with others...who shared it with others. How would you have heard about Jesus if they

hadn't shared it with others? Certainly we find this to be true when we study church history, and we read about faithful men and women who have gone before us and gave up their lives so that others could hear about Jesus. When we read about the reformers or we read about how Christianity was brought to North America from Europe or when we understand how the message of the gospel spread in America through people like Jonathon Edwards and others, how would we have heard the gospel without them going before us and taking Romans 10 seriously?

But this morning I would like you to consider something even more personal, that the way you got here this morning was because there were faithful believers who introduced you to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now we all have different stories here, but I'm guessing that there has been at least one person in your life that was instrumental in you being here today, hearing about Jesus. This wasn't something that was far, far away. Perhaps this was a friend or a family member or a coworker or a neighbor. These were people who thought, "I want Michael to know and experience the grace and the goodness of Jesus Christ, but I don't know if he knows who that is. How will he know and believe this unless I tell him." It was someone in your life who stepped out on faith and introduced you to Jesus. You know, maybe they didn't even share the gospel with you—maybe they asked you some thought-provoking spiritual question, or maybe they just invited you to church, and you started going to church and, over time, you heard the gospel message of Jesus Christ and you believed. Maybe some of you this morning are like me. You grew up in a Christian home, and you might think, "Well, no one really stepped into my life. I just grew up in the church, and at some point, I believed." Well, I would encourage you to take some time in the next couple of weeks and try to trace back your family's spiritual history. When did your family become a Christian family who started going to church? Whenever that was, I guarantee you, it was because someone reached out to your dad or someone reached out to your grandmother, or someone reached out to your great-grandfather, or someone reached out to your great-great-great-grandmother. We all got here the exact same way, because there were men and women who stepped out on faith and shared the message of hope with us and with others. Missions isn't something that is far, far away. Missions is the only way you heard the gospel.

Romans 10: *how would you have heard about Jesus without someone telling you about Him?* And once we understand what has happened for us in history to hear the gospel, we become grateful goers and senders who are eager to steward this good news of Jesus that has been entrusted to us. Once we understand that we are only here today because there were faithful people in our lives to share the message of hope with us, we stop merely being *receivers* of the message, and we start being *proclaimers* of it. Once we understand that missions is not just something that is far, far away, but is the only means by which we heard the gospel, our lives become less about ourselves and more about others.

Now I don't know about you, but I tend to do my best dreaming at night—sometime between when I lay down and fall asleep. This is when I have my big ideas and when I feel like I can do anything. I remember as a kid I would lay there and think, "You know what, tomorrow at school I'm gonna ask that pretty girl if she would be my girlfriend." And I would start to plan it out in my mind. I would imagine how smooth I would be in the conversation with her, how smooth I would handle everything. And I would start to think, "Well, of course she's going to say yes tomorrow." I would think everything through, and in the end I would think, "Yes, this is going to happen tomorrow." But what would always happen? I would fall asleep, and the next morning I would wake up and I would think, "Ehh..." I would start to think about why those plans wouldn't work. "You know, maybe she already has a boyfriend or maybe today wouldn't be a good day to ask her out, maybe Wednesday is better for that." In the morning I would quit dreaming and start thinking about why

those plans wouldn't work. I would talk myself out of them. And of course, I hadn't told anyone about these plans, so it didn't make a difference if I went through with them or if I just cancelled them. No one would complain; no one would make a fuss. I would simply dismiss the idea and it was gone.

You know, there are moments when I am in Poland, when I'm walking streets and I'm looking at the people or I'm thinking about my friends there, and I start to think about how we got there. And I start to think how there was a moment for Jeff and the leadership team at Lincoln Berean, when the idea of sending a team to Poland was just a small dream. And I'm sure there was a moment at the beginning when they could have just said, "Ehh..." They could have started to think about all of the reasons why that dream wouldn't work—maybe no one would join this team, maybe the church doesn't have enough finances, etc. They could have talked themselves out of that dream, out of that vision, and no one would have complained; no one would have made a fuss. They could have simply dismissed that idea and it would have been gone, but they didn't; you, as a church, didn't. You bought into that dream—into that vision—and you sent our team to Poland. You sent a team to Spain, and you sent a host of missionaries to other parts of the world. And what started as a small dream, that could have easily been dismissed, is now bearing fruit in the lives of people around the world in Poland, in Spain and Belgium and India. People's lives have been changed.

What is God speaking to you this morning? Maybe this morning God is leading you to talk to one of your friends or family members about Jesus. Maybe just ask them a question, "What do you believe?" Maybe God is leading you to start a Bible study at work. Maybe you're here this morning and God is leading you to start going to church. Perhaps this morning God is even leading you to call on the name of the Lord and be saved. You want to experience the grace and the goodness of Jesus Christ. Today is the day of salvation! Perhaps God is leading you to be more intentional about sharing the love of Christ with someone who needs it right now. Maybe God is leading you to come alongside someone and just ask them, "How's it going with your soul?" Perhaps God is leading you to find ways to serve here in the Lincoln community. Maybe God is even leading you to go on a short-term missions' trip, or at least to investigate what that could look like for you. And I have to think that in a church this big, that perhaps God is leading some of you to consider serving Him overseas somewhere long-term, to tell people about Jesus who have never heard about Him. Well, if that's you, let me tell you—let me be the first to tell you—this isn't an easy calling. There are going to be highs and lows and hardships all along the way. But let me tell you, I wouldn't trade this journey for anything. I mentioned earlier that we have tried some things in ministry that have totally bombed, that have totally failed. But do you know what my only regrets have been, during the time we have been there? It hasn't been the times that we have stepped out on faith and failed. It's been the times where we didn't—the times where we played it safe, the times where we didn't step out on faith and trust God. You know, we're not going to get to the end of our lives and say, "I wish I would've had less faith." But there's a good chance we could get to the end of our lives and say, "I wish I would've had more."

So, perhaps this morning God is putting some sort of step of faith on your heart. Maybe it's just a small dream, a small vision of what your future could look like. You know, it'd be real easy for you to leave this morning and say, "Ehh..." It'd be real easy for you to think about all of the reasons why that dream wouldn't work. It'd be real easy for you to leave this morning and to talk yourself out of it. No one would complain. No one would make a fuss. You could simply dismiss the idea and it would be gone. But what if you didn't? What if you took that next step of faith? What if you started a journey of investigating that dream and asking God, "Lord, what would You have me do with my life?" What if you followed the Holy Spirit's leading and talked to that friend about

your faith? What if you invited that coworker to church? What if you started being more intentional in your relationships in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ? What if you went on a short-term mission trip this summer? What if you gave your life to see others reached for Christ who have never heard about Him? What if...?

**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 here without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?** We all got here this morning in the exact same way. The question is: *What will you do when you leave?* Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened. Do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you. He is with you wherever you will go. Let me pray for us.

*Father, we thank You for Your love. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your grace bestowed on us. And, God, we thank You for the opportunity to be involved in Your mission here on earth. Father, lead us; help us to be bold; help us to walk out on faith and trust You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

\*Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE  
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,  
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.  
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512  
Copyright 2013 – Clint Kirby. All rights reserved.