

Romans Study Session 16 - Romans 10

Last week we examined Paul's heart-felt concern for his fellow countrymen. While they had been entrusted with the special revelation of God Himself, in large part, they had failed to receive the message by faith. Paul longed for the Jews to come to Christ for salvation en masse yet he wasn't seeing it happen. This led him to ask and answer the big question which was: Has the purpose of God been frustrated? Did the rejection of the Messiah by God's chosen people wreck God's will for the salvation of mankind? This led to Paul's answer which in short was "no" but he did so by revealing that God's choice of Israel as His chosen people was His choice based upon His election, not on any merit residing in Israel itself. Also, God is sovereign and so He is free to act as He sees fit according to His own nature and will. Thus, despite Israel's rejection of Christ, God's plan is not thwarted but is carried on largely through the Gentile believers.

This week Paul is going to expand upon his statements of chapter 9. We are going to see from v.1 that this chapter links to chapter 9. In fact, while we went all the way through chapter 9 last week, actually vv. 30-33 are the first part of the thought of chapter 10. The big thought in this chapter is that Israel has no excuse for their rejection of the Messiah. They had all the advantages in coming to know God and His righteousness, yet they didn't couple them with faith and thus were/are missing out on God's salvation. This chapter can be divided into two sections: 1) Israel's lack of the right knowledge, 2) Possible reasons why Israel failed to receive the gospel and who can attain a right standing before God.

[Read Romans 9:30-10:4]

It's important to note that the success of the Gentiles in attaining to God's righteousness is attributed to their avoidance of the false approach of the Jews and their willingness to receive righteousness as a gift. Paul again hammers the nail in the coffin and shows just how futile human works are as a means of gaining justification. Just as it was for Israel, it is for anyone seeking to gain a right standing today - it can't be done by human works.

Chapter 10 begins with Paul's lament for Israel that he knows he cannot save his countrymen. Only God can do that by moving in their hearts and he's not seeing much of that happening.

Q: In Paul's mind, what does Israel have going for it? (v.2 - *they are zealous for God*)

The word "zeal" is often translated "jealousy" as well as "zeal" which means to make hot. It's an emotional state and when it speaks of jealousy, it's a jealousy that is fierce as it is desiring something it sees as righteous to happen. Since the time between Malachi and Paul's time, zealotry was a positive trait and pretty much a requirement for those who truly wanted to follow God. It was how a person was seen as pious in the Jewish culture. During the Intertestamental period, the Jews were nearly wiped out and so to be fierce and on-fire for God was a sign that a person was standing tall for God and willing to do what it took to see God's will accomplished. In Jesus' day, there was a political group called "the Zealots" who were a radical political/religious movement pushing for Jewish independence from Rome by citing the authority of Scripture. Jesus showed zeal in his cleansing of the temple and Paul, as Saul, was certainly

zealous in his persecution of the early church.

Q: According to Paul in v.2, what did Paul's countrymen lack? (*knowledge*)

Q: Israel was the sole repository of God's special revelation - the Old Testament. In what way could it be said that they lacked knowledge? (v.3 - *They missed the knowledge of God's righteousness and how to attain to it by faith.*)

Q: Based upon what we've read in Romans to this point, how did the Jews seek righteousness? (*through works based in the Law*)

Paul shows the failure of his countrymen in two vital areas: 1) They failed to recognize Christ as the culmination of God's plan. This was God's decisive turn in all of salvation history and yet they missed it, 2) they are faulted for being overly concerned with works of the law while neglecting faith in God. When you put their zeal together with their preoccupation with works of the law you get a race of people who didn't see what God was doing though He did it right in front of their eyes.

v.3 - "did not subject themselves". This is in the aorist tense and shows the length of Israel's rejection of God's grace. They didn't subject themselves to God in the past and they are not doing so now. (Just as they rejected the message brought by God's prophets of old, they are now rejecting God's Son who sought to bring life to the world through them.)

v.4 - "end" means "termination" or "conclusion of a matter". What Paul is saying is that the Law had run its course, like a runner in a relay. It completed its portion of the race and now it's handed off the baton to Christ, who is the anchorman for the race of righteousness. Christ crossed the finish line and the race is over. It is settled that Christ is the only way to righteousness now. What this does NOT mean is that Christ did away with the Law. [**Matthew 5:17 - 20**] - The only way for a person's righteousness to surpass that of the Pharisees and scribes is through faith in Christ. (Just what Paul has been saying in the last two chapters.) So, while the law is righteous in its requirement, it fails as an instrument of justification. The Law is God's tool to bring the lost to Himself by showing them His holy requirements and then how far the sinner has fallen from meeting those requirements. In this way, the Law is good as it leads the lost to Christ. (Romans 3:19-20) The Jews attempted to use the law to establish a righteousness through human effort rather than by acceptance of the divine gift. While the law fails to be able to provide righteousness, those who believe in Christ have it provided to them.

Q: Who is eligible for God's righteousness? (v.4 - *everyone who believes*)

Q: If a person is not in Christ, what are "in"? (*the law and will be subject to the full effects of it*)

In vv. 5-8 Paul continues his discussion of "everyone who believes" he began in v.4. You are going to read two things about this truth. 1) the principle of righteousness by faith is sufficiently set forth in the Old Testament, 2) by expressly indicating "everyone" (which is in line with Romans 1:16) he is including the Gentiles in the mix. Yet, it doesn't take long for Paul to return to his real reason for writing chapters 9-11 which is why Israel didn't recognize and receive Christ for righteousness. Throughout the rest of the chapter, he's going to give possible reasons (actually excuses) for Israel's rejection of Christ. Remember, he's never met the Romans

before so he's covering some of the excuses and reasons he's heard through his years of work preaching the gospel and whether they hold any weight or not. As we'll see, none of them hold any weight.

Reason #1 - Maybe gaining righteousness is just too hard. It's beyond the ability of man to accomplish.

[Read Romans 10:5-8]

[Leviticus 18:5]

Q: If one points to the law for their righteousness, how should that person live? (*v.5 - according to the law*)

Q: Is it possible to fully live according to the law? (*no*)

It's important before we continue to realize that when Paul is speaking about the person who derives their righteousness from the law, that he's speaking of an impossibility. It's not just difficult or challenging, it's impossible. This is crucial to understand the next link in Paul's argument.

For the meaning of vv. 6-8, we need to go back to **[Deuteronomy 30:11-14]** Paul is saying that the Jews are making salvation too hard by their insistence upon trying to keep the law in order to be right before God. Yet, God has told them that what He desires for them is not too difficult for them and it is close to them - in their mouths and hearts. This was in the Old Testament God said this!

The mouth is indicated and the mouth is that which we repeat the word of God and use for humble prayer to God and it is our instrument of praise. The heart is mentioned and it is the source of desire which in this case is to please God. No one needs to ascend into heaven to gain spiritual knowledge. Christ came from heaven to proclaim and effect salvation. The incarnation and resurrection put God within our grasp. Also, Christ was not lost to us through His death so we don't need to descend into the abyss to pull Him out. The resurrection returned Him to us so that no one can say that Jesus is out of our reach for salvation. This passage is actually a great source of comfort for not only the lost but also the saved in that it teaches us that God's will is not too difficult for us to accomplish -if we are looking to accomplish it through faith rather than our own efforts. His will is near to us.

Reason #2 - Maybe the Jews have never heard the good news.

[Read Romans 10:9-13]

Q: Who is the gospel message available to? (*everyone*)

Q: What are the two aspects of salvation Paul gives in vv. 9-10? (*confess with one's mouth and believe in one's heart that Jesus was resurrected*)

Notice how concise this is. Paul doesn't mention Jesus' death on the cross because it's

assumed that if He rose from the dead, He started out dead.

Q: What is the confession of the mouth? *(v. 9 - that Jesus is Lord)*

Confessing Jesus as Lord is one of the fundamental building blocks of the Christian faith. Also it distinguished believers from the rest of the world. Jews would never make the proclamation that Jesus was Lord because they didn't believe He was God. A Gentile would never make the confession because they claimed that the Emperor was Lord. Thus, only a Christian would ever confess that Jesus was Lord and by that confession, it set the person apart for God's purposes.

Q: What is the result of those who believe in Christ? *(v.11 - they are not disappointed)*

Q: In this context, what do you think that means? *(It means that Christ is sufficient for salvation and He is faithful to save those who put their trust in Him. They get what they bargain for - they want salvation and God delivers it.)*

[Isaiah 28:16]

Faith in Christ is transforming to the life that expresses it. It replaces fear and hesitation with bold confidence that rests upon the sure promises of God. Since everyone needs Christ, everyone who calls upon Him will be saved. Keep in mind that Paul's true reason for this section is to let us know that the salvation God desires for all mankind to know and enjoy is readily available and is not beyond the grasp of anyone to attain. The Jews just need to give up on trying to live by the law.

Paul continues to discuss the possibility that maybe his countrymen never really heard the good news.

[Read Romans 10:14-15]

Here we see Paul turn to God's plan for reaching the lost through the lives of believers and away from the responsibility of the seeker. Remember, the calling upon God in faith is the key to obtaining salvation.

Q: What is the first step to calling upon the Lord? *(v.14 - believing in Him)*

Calling upon the Lord is meaningless apart from the assurance that He is worthy to be called upon and worthy of confidence and trust and that He has something to offer sinners.

Q: How does one come to believe in God - the God that is worthy to be called upon? *(by hearing the Word)*

Q: What is necessary for hearing? *(v. 14 - a preacher - this isn't speaking of a member of the clergy but rather any Christian who is proclaiming the gospel in some accurate manner.)*

There are two parts to the “sent” that we need to keep in mind. 1) The one who is sent is operating under a higher authority than himself, 2) his message does not originate with himself but rather in the sending authority.

[Acts 13:1-3]

[II Corinthians 5:20-1] - We are ambassadors - representatives of our Heavenly Father and His kingdom. We have become the very righteousness of God in Christ thus our message is one of Christ and how others can enjoy that same status.

The word “beautiful” that goes with feet actually means coming at or belonging to the right time or season - timely. These feet bring the good news at God’s right time.

Now we’ve all heard sermons on this passage and how we are to go out and preach the gospel far and wide based upon it. However, this isn’t what this passage is explicitly teaching. It is explicitly teaching that the Jews have no excuse for not receiving the Lord Jesus for salvation. Paul’s tone is that this has already been done for the sake of the Jews and many Gentiles. This passage assumes that we are going to be doing these things mentioned here where it is needed and it’s not wrong to teach it on that basis - but the explicit teaching is that the excuse that the Jews hadn’t heard the good news is blown away by this section.

[Isaiah 52:1-2] - This is the bridge verse between v. 15 & v. 16. If heralding the good news of God’s favor was good news in Isaiah’s day concerning the restoration of Israel to her land, how much more will the good news be of God’s favor in His Son offering us salvation? However, there is a tragic note. The message was not believed.

Reason #3 - Maybe the Jews didn’t understand the message of the gospel

[Read Romans 10: 16-21]

“Not all” of v.16 is an idiom that means “not many”. It echos the remnant message of 9:6.

v.17 - “hearing” means to hear with understanding and acceptance - not merely hear the words being spoken. Did Israel hear the message? Yes. It was given to them directly by God. They fully understood the message but they, in large part, did not accept it. In fact, as was Paul’s experience, they persecuted anyone who dared to accept the message of the gospel. They were jealous of the right standing it brought to the Gentiles and Jews who believed it.

Q: Going over these verses, what is the progression that leads to faith in Christ? (*vv. 13-17 - someone preaches the word of God then someone hears it and believes it and then calls upon the Lord for salvation.*)

Then in v.18, Paul is investigating all possibilities, is there anything, any reason at all which would account for Israel not believing the message of grace offered to her? Is there any excuse for the nation’s failure? Think of it, the Gentiles who lacked the special revelation of Scripture and the moral and religious training God provided Israel have proved to be more

responsive to the good news than the chosen people.

The simple truth. None of the reasons given explain Israel's true reason for rejecting the Messiah.

Paul closes out this section with the indictment against His countrymen that their spiritual condition did not come from a lack of opportunity to hear the gospel or a lack of understanding. Rather it can be traced back to their stubborn and rebellious hearts - as they had exhibited back in Moses' day. VV. 20-21 refer back to Isaiah 65:1-2. This idea of God making Israel jealous will come back next week. However, to close this section - the word "obstinate" (NASB) means "talking back, dispute (usually disrespectfully) and contradict. This is the state of the heart of Israel. Paul is laying it out that they have no excuse for not recognizing the Messiah. They were so busy trying to keep the law and establish a righteousness based upon it, that they completely missed what God was doing. The Gentiles, who believed without any of the advantages the Jews had, were coming to Christ for salvation. For us we need to keep in mind that those who come to salvation may be those we least expect to do so. Salvation is a work of God in the heart of man. We are merely the ambassadors while Christ is the author of faith and salvation. We need to keep our eyes upon Him so we know where He is working and join Him there.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?