

### **Romans 10:1-21**

What we discover as believers when we study Scripture is that we encounter tension there – particularly in regards to some doctrinal issues. How does an infinite, omniscient God change his mind? (Ex. 32:14; Jonah 3:10). When Jesus “*emptied himself*” what did that entail? Did he become less God or was he still fully God? We come to another one of those tensions this morning in Romans 10.

Romans 9 teaches divine election. Rocky gave us as clear a presentation as you can have last Sunday. God had repeatedly demonstrated that he operates by sovereign choice. Thus Isaac had been chosen over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau. Moses and Pharaoh provided further examples. God is the potter, humanity is the clay, and God can do as he pleases. Thus the inscrutable doctrine of God's sovereign election.

Now we come to Romans 10 and note how Paul begins in verse 1. What does Paul do in light of the clear sovereign choice of God in Romans 9? He prays. Why? What is the point of prayer in light of the fact that salvation is based on God's choice? It is obvious that Paul has a compassionate concern for Israel. He expressed it in 9:1-3 and again here in 10:1. So despite Paul's profound conviction that God saves whomever he will by an irresistible choice, nevertheless this does not stop Paul from praying and yearning over his kinsman according to the flesh. Do you feel the tension? In chapter 9 the emphasis was on God's purpose according to election; the emphasis of chapter 10, however, is on the human factors, on the need for an understanding of the gospel (vv. 5–13), for the proclamation of the gospel (vv. 14–15), and for the response of faith (vv. 16–21). Here in chapter 10 Paul presents us with human responsibility. Israel is lost because they have rejected God.

The Word of God teaches both God's elective sovereignty and man's responsibility, though it does not show us how to reconcile this paradox – tension. God rejected Israel because Israel rejected the gospel. If an individual does not have Christ, it is not because he/she are non-elect, but because they are rejecting Christ. You cannot place the blame on anyone else. At least five times in this chapter (vv. 8, 11, 12, 16, and 21) the responsibility of the Jews is implicitly emphasized. As we examine chapter 10 we want to see what the Jews (God's privileged people) need to know if they are to have salvation.

#### **I. Zeal for God/Spiritual Things Does not Result in Salvation Romans 10:1-13**

Paul recognizes that the Jews, his kinsmen, had a genuine zeal for God. There was no doubt about their religious sincerity. Paul can actually testify about that from his own experience for he himself pre-conversion was extremely zealous in religion and persecution of the church. Indeed he was just as zealous for God as any of his contemporaries and could even describe his zeal as an obsession - Phil. 3:4-6.

But Paul came to know that all that zeal did not produce righteousness for God – there was no salvation despite the zeal. It is that salvation (righteousness) that Paul desired for his Jewish brothers to come to know as well. Instead of turning to God in repentance the Jews “*sought to establish their own*” righteousness (v. 3). They saw the Law as a way to lift themselves up to God. There are many people like that today, both Jews and Gentiles who believe that you get right with God by working at it.

Verse 4 makes it clear however that righteousness comes only to those who believe. One might ask, ‘*believe what?*’ We will soon discover that it is to believe that Jesus is Lord (he is God) and that he was raised from the dead – 10:9-10.

There is a phrase we need to deal with in verse 4 before we move on. *Christ is the end of the law*... The Greek word *telos* and its English equivalent “*end*” can refer either to termination (as in “*the end of the matter*”) or to purpose (as in “*to the end that*”). One of the statements that Jesus made concerning the law and his relationship

to it was that he did not come to abolish (destroy, dissolve or demolish) the law but to fulfill it – to establish completely (Matt. 2:15). He did so by perfectly conforming his life to its high standards and thereby becoming the perfect holy sacrifice for our sins. Paul reminds us in both Rom. 7:7-13 and Gal. 3:24 that the law was a tutor pointing out our sin and leading us to faith in Christ. The law is holy, righteous and good (7:12) but it is not a means to salvation. God never intended it to provide eternal salvation for the Israelites (Rom. 3:20). He did not give it for a redemptive purpose.

Wiersbe: *Christ is the “end of the law” in the sense that through his death and resurrection, he has terminated the ministry of the Law for those who believe. The Law is ended as far as Christians are concerned. The righteousness of the Law is being fulfilled in the life of the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:4); but the reign of the Law has ended (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14) for as Rom. 6:14 states we are not under law but under grace. (Be Right, pg. 115)*

Should one make the choice to live under the law then that is the righteousness one will attain – v. 5. What kind of righteousness is that? A self-made impotent, arrogant righteousness that accomplishes nothing in regard to salvation. One might look good and be very sincere but at the same time very lost. The fact is, a man or woman can be zealous for the Scriptures, zealous for Sunday school, zealous for the programs of the Church, zealous for body life, zealous for all of these things, and still be unregenerate.

The righteousness that matters is a righteousness by faith – vv. 6-8. Here we come to the first of numerous Old Testament quotes. John Stott in his commentary on Romans stated it like this: *One of the notable features of Romans 10 is that it is saturated with Old Testament allusion and quotation. Paul cites Scripture here in order to confirm or illustrate eight truths: **first**, the ready accessibility of Christ to faith (6–8 = Dt. 30:12ff.); **second**, the promise of salvation to all who believe (11 = Is. 28:16; 13 = Joel 2:32); **third**, the glorious necessity of evangelism (15 = Is. 52:7); **fourth**, the unresponsiveness of Israel (16 = Is. 53:1); **fifth**, the universality of the gospel (18 = Ps. 19:4); **sixth**, the Gentiles’ provocation of Israel (19 = Dt. 32:21); **seventh**, the divine initiative of grace (20 = Is. 65:1); and **eighth**, the patient grief of God the evangelist (21 = Is. 65:2). Thus Paul’s emphasis is not only on the authority of Scripture, but also on the fundamental continuity which unites the Old and the New Testament revelations.*

Here in vv. 6-8 Paul quotes from Deut. 30:12-14. This is Moses' farewell address to the nation in which he argued that the Jews had no reason to disobey the Word of God because it had been clearly explained to them and it was not far from them. *In applying this to the righteousness which is by faith we could state it like this: Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’—that is, to bring Christ down (as though he had never become incarnate and lived on earth). Or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’—that is, to bring him back from the realms of the dead, the nethermost deep (as though he had not already been raised up to newness of life). No; this is what the good news of justification says: The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart—that is, the message of faith which we proclaim. (Romans: Introduction and Commentary, F.F. Bruce)*

What is the word of faith? Paul answers that in vv. 9-10. In simplest terms, what does Romans 10:9, 10 require? In verse 9, Paul follows the order of Deuteronomy 30 (cited in verse 8), “*in your mouth and in your heart.*” In verse 10, he explains verse 9 (“*for*”) in the logical order: First we believe in the heart and then that heart belief finds outward expression in confession with our mouths and with our lives. Paul uses “*faith*” or “*believe(s)*” in 9:30, 32, 33; 10:4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14 (2x), 16, & 17. There are **not** two requirements here for salvation, namely, believing and confessing. Rather, the repeated emphasis on faith shows that faith is the only requirement. As Paul told the Philippian jailer in response to his question, “*What must I do to be saved?*” (**Acts 16:31**), “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*”

What then is the point of confession – *homologeō* – to say the same thing? Outward confession of Christ is the inevitable outcome or character of genuine saving faith. Faith is the root; confession is the fruit. We are saved by

grace through faith in Christ alone, but if our faith is genuine, it will always bear the fruit of salvation (Eph. 2:8-10).

Here Paul defines our faith in 2 ideas:

It requires a belief in two things: **First**, that “*Jesus is Lord*.” Ultimately all will do the same – Phil. 2:9-11. In the early church the phrase “*Jesus is Lord*” was one of the most common and simple expressions by which believers confessed their faith in Christ (Acts. 2:36; 1 Cor. 12:3). It is a confession parallel and very similar to Israel’s basic confession of faith in Yahweh: “*Yahweh our God is one Lord*” (Deut. 6:4, the Shema).

The fact that Jesus is Lord (God and Savior) became clear when He arose from the dead (v. 7). Jesus’ resurrection was the proof that He really was the divine Messiah, God’s Holy One.

So **secondly**, Romans 10:9, 10 requires that you believe that God raised Christ from the dead. Implicit in the good news are the truths that Jesus Christ died, was raised, was exalted, and now reigns as Lord and bestows salvation on those who believe. This message, this salvation is available for everyone and anyone – note the *whoever’s* in vv. 11 and 13. Why? Because there is no difference or better no favoritism with God. Here is the point: the responsibility to accept the gift of salvation rests on man, not anyone else. This underlines the reason Paul now launches into the necessity of evangelism and proclaiming the gospel.

## **II. Salvation Requires a Hearing of the Gospel Romans 10:14-17**

In order to demonstrate the indispensable necessity of evangelism, Paul asks four consecutive questions:

**First**, if, in order to be saved, sinners must call on the name of the Lord (13), *How can they call (epikaleo – to summon or appeal to) on the one they have not believed in?* (14a). Calling on his name presupposes that they know and believe his name (i.e. that he died, was raised and is Lord).

**Secondly**, *how can they believe (pisteuo – faith) in the one of whom they have not heard?* (14b). Just as believing is logically prior to calling, so hearing is logically prior to believing.

**Thirdly**, *how can they hear without someone preaching (kēryssō, to ‘herald’) to them?* (14c). This is not a preacher but rather a proclaimer – one who shares a message. In ancient times, before the development of the mass media of communication, the role of the herald was vital. The major means of transmitting news was his public proclamations in the city square or the marketplace. There could be no hearers without heralds.

**Fourthly**, *how can they preach (better herald or proclaim) unless they are sent?* (15a). It is not clear from the text what kind of ‘sending’ Paul has in mind. Because he uses the verb *apostellō*, some limit this to apostles but biblically we are all sent ones as proclaimers of the gospel – Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Peter 2:9. The essence of Paul’s argument is seen if we put his six verbs in the opposite order: Christ sends heralds – you and me; heralds proclaim – share the gospel; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved.

All the time we are doing this God is at work calling people to himself yet at the same time it is an individual’s responsibility to believe. The sovereign electing grace of God and the responsibility of man to believe are woven together. The reality is that many who hear and understand refuse to believe which brings us to the last four verses of the chapter.

## **III. Many Who Hear Still Reject the Gospel Romans 10:18-21**

The whole section is about the Jewish response-or rather non-response—to the gospel. Why then have the Israelites not believed? In answer to this perplexing question Paul rejects two possible explanations (vv. 18–19),

and then supplies his own explanation (vv. 20–21). First, did they not hear? This is the right first question to ask, since believing depends on hearing. But Paul no sooner asks the question than he summarily dismisses it: Of course they did (v. 18a). As evidence of this assertion he quotes Psalm 19:4. Second, then, did Israel not understand (19a)? It is quite possible to hear without understanding, as Jesus warned us in his parable of the sower. But Paul also rejects this explanation of Jewish unbelief, and backs up his position by quoting from Moses followed by Isaiah.

This text from Deut. 32:21 indicates that there are people with '*no understanding*'. But they are not the Jews; they are the Gentiles, whom Moses also describes as '*not a nation*'.

God reveals his intention to make Israel both '*envious of*' and '*angry at*' the '*no-nation, no understanding*' Gentiles because of the blessings he would give them.

In order to enforce this, Paul now quotes Isaiah 65:1-2. The Gentiles who were not in a covenant relationship with God who were idol worshippers who had no reason to know God had come into a relationship with him. But as for Israel who was in a covenant relationship with God remained stubborn and obstinate.

If, then, Israel's rejection of the gospel cannot be attributed either to her not hearing it or to her not understanding it, she must be without excuse. This brings about the third and ultimate reason for Israel's unbelief, which Paul now declares. Israel is simply stubborn.

Look at the picture in verse 21. God does not simply allow himself to be found; he actively holds out his hands to them. Like a parent inviting a child to come home, offering a hug and a kiss, and promising a welcome, so God has opened and stretched out his arms to his people, and has kept them continuously outstretched, all day long, pleading with them to return. But he has received no response. They do not even give him the neutral response of the Gentiles, who decline either to ask or to seek. No, their response is negative, resistant, recalcitrant, and dismissive. They are determined to remain a disobedient and obstinate people. Recalls the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39.

## **Conclusion**

So Paul concludes his second exploration into the unbelief of Israel. In chapter 9 he attributed it to God's purpose of sovereign election, on account of which many were passed by, and only a remnant was left, an Israel within Israel. In chapter 10, however, he attributes it to Israel's own disobedience. Their fall was their fault. They had heard the gospel, understood the gospel but rejected the gospel. The antinomy between divine sovereignty and human responsibility remains.

Where does that leave us? What about Israel – is there any future for them? Have they been so obstinate and rebellious that God is done with them? Tune into chapter 11 for the answer to that question.

As for us we are to be prayers and proclaimers of the gospel in word and deed because God is calling people and people are responsible to hear and believe. We are salt and light, the people of God in the world.