

CONCERNING THE WAY

January 18, 2011

LESSON 117: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS



Chapter 10 – Human Responsibility and Israel's Present

We're in that section of the book of Romans, chapters 9-11, where Paul talks about the past, present, and future of the Jews. In chapter 9 Paul expressed his grief that the majority of his brother Jews had rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. He explained that they had stumbled over Christ, because they were pursuing righteousness by works, not by faith. He pointed out that this was not a failure on God's part, but that not all descendants of Abraham were true Israelites, only the children of the promise through Isaac and Jacob. And not even all of those are true Israelites, but only those whom God had chosen. Out of the millions of Jews, only a few will be saved (like the Gentiles), by the grace of God. So there will always be a remnant of believing Jews in whom God will finally fulfill His promises to Israel. Paul also has pointed out that God has also called out a people from the rest of humanity, the Gentiles – a people who weren't even seeking God.

Romans 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God about the Jews is that they would be saved.

Similar to the beginning of chapter 9, Paul expresses heartfelt emotion about his people. He saw that most of the Jews were rejecting Christ, and it broke his heart.

Romans 10:2 For I can testify on their behalf that they have a zeal for God, but it is not in keeping with full knowledge.

The Jews were zealous for God, and had a lot of knowledge about Him, but they didn't have "full knowledge" about Him. If they had, they wouldn't have stumbled over Christ. Here's a quote by Josephus, 1st century Romano-Jewish historian:

"The Jew knows the Law better than his own name . . . The great feasts were frequented by countless thousands, . . . Over and above the requirements of the Law, ascetic religious exercises advocated by the teachers of the Law came into vogue . . . Even the Hellenised and Alexandrian Jews under Caligula died on the cross and by fire, and the Palestinian prisoners in the last war died by the claws of African lions in the amphitheatre, rather than sin against the Law. What Greek would do the like? . . . The Jews also exhibited an ardent zeal for the conversion of the Gentiles to the Law of Moses. The proselytes filled Asia Minor and Syria, and—to the indignation of Tacitus—Italy and Rome." Josephus

"Mohammedans have zeal. When I passed through the Azhar Mosque, in Cairo, a Moslem merchant was kneeling, forehead on the carpet, in prayer. Four hours later I saw him still kneeling! And outside were over 10,000 students, diligently learning the Koran! Zeal must not be mistaken for knowledge in Divine things." William Newell

This is a very important verse for all of us. We can be zealous in serving God, we can work really hard to please Him, but if we are doing it for the wrong reasons, it is worthless. If you do the work but have no knowledge of who Jesus really is and have no relationship with Him, then you're wasting your time. Like the Jews Paul is talking about, they don't know Christ. You're barking up the wrong tree. This

also goes for those who are zealous in other religions. You may be very sincere and do everything your religion tells you to do, but if you don't know Christ, it doesn't do you a bit of good. You don't get "credit" for your effort.

But notice you can have a real zealousness for the real God, and it still doesn't do anything for you if you don't have the right knowledge.

Where do we get this "full knowledge"? That's right – the Bible. There is no other place. You can't get it from another religion, you can't get it from your genealogy, you can't get it from tradition, and you can't get it from your own experience. You can't even get it from worship or any church denomination or creed. So the only place where we can get the knowledge we need to be saved, to be accepted by God, is the place that no one wants to read any more, and many churches don't want to teach.

Romans 10:3 For they are ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God while they try to establish their own, and they have not submitted to God's means to obtain righteousness.

The Jews tried to be righteous on their own, instead of submitting to God's way of righteousness, which is to believe what God says. This was not something new, but started with Abraham, whom God credited with righteousness only because he believed (Genesis 15:6). For us today it is the same – we receive salvation and are credited with righteousness because we believe God. And the object of that belief for us is Jesus Christ, who obeyed God and went to the cross to take God's wrath in our place because of our sin.

God is not interested in how you think you should be able to get to heaven. He has provided THE WAY – not various ways. These verses make it clear that you can't be saved by following another religion, and you can't be saved by following the Law – that's trying to establish your own righteousness. Our righteousness can never be good enough. For us to be fit to spend eternity with Him, God requires us to have righteousness equal to His own righteousness. We could never ever reach that. So, because God loves us and wants us to be with Him forever, He has made a way to make us righteous. God's way to righteousness is to trust in the Messiah. Any attempt to establish your own righteousness is open rebellion against God. It insults His method of imputing Christ's righteousness to us.

Romans 10:4 For the Messiah is the culmination of the law as far as righteousness is concerned for everyone who believes.

The Greek word for culmination could also be translated the "end of the line", or the "end of things". Christ is the end, the termination point of the law. This means that He fulfilled it completely (Matthew 5:17-18), and it also means that He was the purpose or goal of the law, the object that the law pointed to, and that with His arrival it was done away with (Galatians 3:24-25, Hebrews 7:18-19, Ephesians 2:15, Colossians 2:14). Anyone who tries to establish their own righteousness will not find Christ as the end of the law and so they never find true righteousness. They will only be left with their own self-righteousness and so they will be left with nothing.

"The Law was designed not to bring about self-righteousness or self-hope, but contrariwise, self-despair. The law witnessed to a man his need of a mediator—as at Sinai (Deut. 5:23-27). Christ Himself is the righteousness of God. When He died, bearing the sin of the world, the Law's demand for human righteousness was over, ended, closed up, set aside. Christ has now been "made of God unto us righteousness": we want no other. But it is not easy to subject ourselves unto God's righteousness:

for God justifies the ungodly. Justification is a gift for very beggars, the only hope for the guilty, lost and undone. The Jews, ignorant of God's gift of righteousness, utterly refused thus to subject themselves. They said "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man [Jesus], we know not whence He is!" Newell

So, the Jews (as many Gentiles are even today) were set on establishing, building up that which God had cast down – human righteousness. They didn't listen to their own prophets, who said "There is none righteous, no not one", and "All our righteous works are as filthy rags."

"The vast discussion among commentators concerning the expression "the end of the Law," would never have been, had it been recognized: (1) that God gave the Law only to Israel—as He said; (2) that it was a temporary thing, a "ministration of death," to reveal sin, and therefore the necessity of Christ's death; (3) that Christ having come, the day of the Law was over—it was "annulled" see Heb. 7:18." Newell

Romans 10:5 (NASB) For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

Paul, quoting Moses from Leviticus 18:5, is saying that if you live by the law you will be subject to the outcome of that law. And since the law can't produce righteousness, the person who lives by the law for their righteousness will be disappointed. And no one can "practice righteousness" perfectly. The Jews couldn't do it, and neither can we Gentiles. The only one who has ever done it was Jesus.

Many Jews and Gentiles think that if they just try as hard as they can to be a good person, obey the "golden rule", then they will go to heaven. But Paul has made it crystal clear in this book that that's not good enough. He's also told us that it wouldn't be good enough even if someone were able to obey the law perfectly. We're still all condemned because of our connection with Adam. That can only be remedied when we trust Christ and are crucified with Him.

Romans 10:6-8 But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' (that is, to bring the Messiah down), (7) or 'Who will go down into the depths?' (that is, to bring the Messiah back from the dead)." (8) But what does it say? "The message is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart." This is the message about faith that we are proclaiming:

Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 30:12-14 here. Moses is using hyperbole. The righteousness that people want to gain from obeying the law teaches people to DO and live. The righteousness that comes from faith teaches people to BELIEVE and live.

If a Jew were to receive righteousness by keeping the demands of the Law, that would be human achievement; it would not be from God. But a Jew would need to keep the entire Law perfectly all his life—an impossible thing to do (James 2:10). But then Paul also quoted Moses in support of his righteousness-by-faith position centered in Christ as "the end of the Law" and the way by which righteousness is credited to everyone who believes.

Paul wasn't borrowing Moses' words and changing the meaning. He was showing that Moses also taught righteousness by faith. The passage Paul quoted in Romans 10:6-8 is taken somewhat freely from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 with parts of it quoted here and there. This section in Deuteronomy was part of Moses' charge to the generation of Israel about to enter the land of Canaan. This exhortation was the conclusion of Moses' prophetic description of God's dealing with Israel. Blessing was

promised for faith and obedience, and chastisement would come from rejection and disobedience. If Israel forsook God, Moses said, she would face worldwide dispersion and affliction. When the people then finally do turn to God in faith, He will restore them to blessing, prosperity, and prominence among the nations (Deuteronomy 30:1-10).

The point of Moses' exhortation (Deuteronomy 30:11) is that the generation he was speaking to had the message (it was very near you and in your mouth, Deut. 30:14) and could respond by faith (in your heart, Deut. 30:14) and walk with God in obedience. Since the Israelites in Moses' day had the message, they did not need to ask that it be brought down from heaven or that someone "cross the sea to get it" (Deut. 30:13). Instead, the word (Moses' instructions) was "near" them (Deut. 30:14).

Moses clearly taught that the Law was to be written on the hearts of people. It was never meant to be an outward way of justification with God. The Jews were trying to keep the Law outwardly without the right inner attitude of the heart.

So Paul is using the same exhortation to the Jews in his day. Jesus did not need to be brought down from heaven or up from hell. He had already been on earth, died, and been resurrected. Paul went all over the Roman Empire preaching the gospel – the message of righteousness by faith in Christ, and he always went first to the Jews, in their synagogues. But most of them rejected the message. The message was near to them, it was even in their mouths and in their hearts as they debated and discussed it among each other, but most of them never accepted it on faith.

Romans 10:9-11 *If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For one believes with his heart and is justified, and declares with his mouth and is saved. (11) The Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will never be ashamed."*

What does it mean – Jesus is Lord? There may be some reading this that don't know. It refers to the authority Jesus has as the resurrected and glorified Christ, and the fact that He is God. This is what the Jews stumbled over. They read, memorized, and studied scripture, but they didn't believe the full Word of God. If they had, they would have understood and confessed that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah and Lord.

You don't get saved by just having faith. It's the object of that faith that's important. It is faith in the one whom God has sent to die for our sins and resurrected to be Lord of all. When you say "Jesus is Lord", you are saying you believe what God says in His Word, that Jesus came to earth as a man, died for your sins, and was resurrected. You must accept Christ as God and Lord of your life. That's the only faith that saves. A vocal confession often comes with the experience of being saved, but it is not the confession that saves us or causes belief, because you could say it and not really mean it. It is a natural response of genuine belief in the heart.

There are some who use this passage to try to prove their false doctrine of "Lordship salvation". That is, they say you have to claim "Jesus is Lord" in your confession or you are not saved. You have to actually use those words. They believe it's a two-step process. First you have to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and then you have to say the words, "Jesus is Lord."

Isn't that what it says? Well, this is one of those passages that make it important to know the whole Bible. If you read a passage that states something like this that seemingly disagrees with many other passages in the Bible, then you have to stop and wonder what the author meant by that. There are hundreds of other places in the Bible that declare that salvation is by faith alone, and even Paul has

written that many times in his own books. (Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-11) So what does Paul mean by this?

Let's go back to Deuteronomy 30:10-15. Notice that Moses is saying the Word is both in your mouth and in your mind. He doesn't break it apart and make it two separate steps. It's both in our mouths and in our minds. And Paul was just using this to make his point. It shouldn't be made to change the doctrine of salvation of faith by belief in the gospel.

By the way, notice the cool thing Paul did with Deuteronomy 30:12. He puts Christ in there. In other words, we don't have to see Christ to believe in Him – we don't have to go bring Him down from heaven to be able to believe in Him.

So, to sum up, what Paul states in verses 9 and 10 are not two steps – it's the same thing. Belief that Jesus is Lord is the same as saying it. What's in my heart will come out of my mouth. We forget that the idea of Jesus being Lord" actually comes from Psalms 110. He is the new Lord, the Master of everything. It was important that the Jews understand this Psalm as being about the Messiah (though most of them didn't) and believe it. To the Jew that had a special meaning, that Messiah is the Lord mentioned in Psalm 110. To a Gentile, when we trust in Christ for salvation, we must accept that, yes, Jesus IS Lord – not only of the universe, but of every part of ME.

So the Lordship Salvation people would tell you that you must confess with your mouth before you are saved. If you haven't said those words – if you can't say that, then you're not saved. That's pure heresy, folks. Remember John 3:16? Whosoever believes in Him... Salvation is belief plus nothing. That's what the whole Bible teaches – don't try to add anything to it.

The Lordship doctrine has caused havoc in churches, causing divisions and causing some to doubt their salvation. Isn't it interesting how people always want to add something to the simple doctrine of salvation by faith? The interesting thing is that even the Lordship churches don't really practice this. Nobody keeps track of who has said, "Jesus is Lord".

Don't misunderstand me – public confession of faith is important! If we have truly believed in our heart that Jesus is Lord, then we should confess that to others. Jesus when He was on earth among the Jews asked that they confess Him publicly, and the Holy Spirit still asks that of us. This confession was a problem with the Jews, as it says in John 12:42,43. Many Jews did want to believe that Jesus was the one who fulfilled the prophecies about His birth, life, ministry, and possibly even His death. But the hardest part of "Jesus is Lord" to a Jew was and is Christ's resurrection.

Peter may be speaking of these people in 2 Peter 2:20,21, and they may be the people Jesus spoke about in His parable of the Sower – the rocky-ground hearer who "believed for a while, and in time of temptation fell away" (Luke 8). The resurrection is all-important. It is the crux of Christianity. The Jesus the Bible teaches is a risen Lord who today sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for us and waiting for the time of his Kingdom.

Verse 11 is further proof that salvation is belief alone – this is a quote from Isaiah 28, and notice it says "everyone". God's offer of salvation is for everyone, as he goes on to confirm in the next verses:

Romans 10:12-13 **There is no difference between Jew and Greek, because they all have the same Lord, who gives richly to all who call on him. (13) "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

Verse 13 is a quote from Joel 2:32. The expression “calls on the name of the Lord” is a common Old Testament expression of worship to God (Genesis 4:26, 12:8, 1 Kings 18:24, Psalm 79:6, Isaiah 64:7). So everyone, Jew and Gentile, is advised to call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (Acts 9:14, 21, 22:16, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Timothy 2:22). And it doesn’t mean using some kind of religious formula. It means trusting in the one you are calling to, praying in faith to him for salvation. And it is not something that is done lightly. It is willfully entering into a relationship with God. And failure to believe in Jesus as Savior is also a choice, whether a person consciously rejects Him or not. We are all responsible to respond to God’s offer of salvation. If we do not respond, that is an active choice not to believe in Him and it automatically brings God’s judgment (John 3:16-18).

“Now who could miss the meaning of this simplest of all messages? Now, (if we should preach on this verse!) First, salvation is promised. Second, it is a be-saved, not save-yourself, salvation. Third, it is the Lord who is to do it. Fourth, He does it for those who call upon His Name. Fifth, He does it for the whosoever, for anybody. What a preacher, Joel!”

But note that Paul is writing to Jews, and is giving Old Testament texts. For Paul’s great gospel message is to hear and believe “the word of the cross, which is the power of God.” This message goes away beyond that of the Old Testament. Paul preached the good news of a work finished. It was for the “whosoever”: and Joel’s use of that word should have convinced any Jew of God’s purpose of salvation to any one, to all. But Paul does not mean that his gospel was “Call on the Lord.” His gospel was, Christ died for our sins: He was buried, and was raised, for you: hear and believe.” Newell

Romans 10:14-15 How, then, can people call on someone they have not believed? And how can they believe in someone they have not heard about? And how can they hear without someone preaching? (15) And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are those who bring the good news!"

Paul is pointing out that the Jews don’t understand salvation, and one reason, as he pointed out in verses 2-4 above, that they don’t have the full knowledge. And how can they gain that full knowledge unless someone teaches it to them? This is clearly a call to missionary work, and that goes for all of us, not just full-time missionaries. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

Keep in mind that God is sovereign. He is the sender. He is the one who sends people to preach the gospel. He chooses to use us to spread the gospel, but God is the one sending out the good news. The salvation process starts with God’s sending. Paul is quoting Isaiah 52:7 here.

Romans 10:16-17 But not everyone has obeyed the gospel, for Isaiah asks, "Lord, who has believed our message?" (17) Consequently, faith results from listening, and listening results through the word of the Messiah.

Now, in a quote from Isaiah 53:1, Paul points out that the majority of the Jews did not believe the message when it was preached. Then Paul says something important in verse 17.

You don’t just suddenly get faith in Jesus Christ. You don’t get saved by seeing a god in a tree. You can read the classic works of literature, but that won’t save you. You can read the Quran and you will still be lost in your sins. A person in Africa is not going to just wake up some morning and say, “I believe in Jesus!” You have to hear about Him, that’s how you learn who He is. And you’re only going to get that from the Bible, or from someone who is teaching the Bible. The Bible teaches who Jesus is

all throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. If you just watch a TV show on the History channel about Jesus you're not going to learn about who Jesus really is. God has told us about Him from Genesis to Revelation.

Romans 10:18 But I ask, "Didn't they hear?" Certainly they did! In fact, "Their voice has gone out into the whole world, and their words to the ends of the earth."

Paul points out that the Jews have heard, but they still didn't believe, and he quotes Psalm 19:4, which is speaking of the truth of God evident in all creation. So God is clearly evident in creation. Paul expands this to say that the gospel went out. The events of Jesus' death and resurrection were well known not only in Jerusalem but reverberated throughout the Roman Empire. And the gospel was preached by Paul and other apostles throughout the Empire as well – this is about 35 years later.

Some people have said – if people can just hear the gospel, they would believe it! Unfortunately, that's not always true. It's not just hearing that saves people, but what God is doing in their hearts. It is God who calls people. Without that no one would accept the gospel. For most people it is an offense.

"Yes, all men have heard the gospel, even those to whom no preacher has ever gone. Paul here reminds his readers of the same truth he had stressed in Romans 1:20 (see notes on this verse). All men are "without excuse," since God has left a complete witness in the creation, especially in the heavens. Quoting Psalm 19:4, he stresses that a silent but eloquent witness has gone forth into all lands since "the heavens declare the glory of God [which actually is Christ Himself—Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17] and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1), day after day and night after night. Henry Morris

Romans 10:19-21 Again I ask, "Did Israel not understand?" Moses was the first to say, "I will make you jealous by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that doesn't understand." (20) And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who were not looking for me; I was revealed to those who were not asking for me." (21) But about Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and rebellious people."

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32. The word "nation" would be more accurately translated "people", because he's talking about the Gentile nations, not just one nation. This is a prophecy about Gentiles, of course. The word "jealous" could be translated "anger" or "envy". The Gentiles heard the gospel, and many of them accepted the message. And that made the Jews so angry, that the Gentiles were accepting the Messiah that was promised to them. The disbelieving Jews really hated Gentile believers, and that went on for hundreds of years. Then, unfortunately, it flip-flopped. The Gentiles turned on the Jews, as we know from history and it still continues to this day.

Then he quotes Isaiah 65:1-2, and tells us that this prophecy is being fulfilled at that time. Many Gentiles were trusting Christ, but the Jews, for the most part, rejected Christ. So Paul tells us that they did hear the message but they rejected it. They did not accept Jesus as their Messiah, the Lord of Psalm 110. Instead, they would rather try to obtain righteousness through their own works.

So, to sum up this last section, Paul is answering a series of questions he himself has asked:

Has there been opportunity for the entire world to know about God and be led to faith in Christ?

Yes

Did the Jews have that opportunity?

Yes

Has the message gone out to the whole world so people could hear the gospel, think about it, and *discuss it* ?

Yes

Is this true for the Jews also?

Yes

So if the message was heard, what is the problem?

It has not been believed.

Is this also true of the Jews?

Absolutely it is. They did not believe the message.

So who is responsible for this unbelief? Is it God?

No it is each individual – Jew and Gentile – that is responsible.

Paul ends the chapter with a quote from Isaiah 65:2. Because of this rejection by the nation of Israel, God would carry out His vengeance against them in A.D. 70 when Rome sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. They have for the most part been dispersed around the world and experienced much persecution since that time, until 1948, when Israel became a nation once again. We're now waiting for them to recognize their Messiah and call Him back to the earth, so He can bless the nation again as He promised He would in Deuteronomy 30.