

Romans: Chapter Ten

Romans 9.1-11.36: SOVEREIGNTY (Righteousness Rejected)

The Diagnosis of the Apostle (10.1-3)

v.1: Paul's love for Israel could not be questioned (cf. 9.3). Speaking to his spiritual brethren at Rome he describes his great longing and prayerful request to God that they might be saved. The sovereign choice of God to judicially blind the nation did not hinder Paul's prayers for their salvation. **v.2:** Paul now clearly diagnoses the reasons for Israel's rejection of the gospel. He can personally witness (cf. Galatians 1.13-14; Philippians 3.6) to their fervent, but misplaced 'zeal' towards God. They upheld the law and OT scriptures, carefully observing all the rituals and ceremonies of Judaism. But their zeal was not according to 'full knowledge' (*epignosis*) now revealed in Christ. Their understanding was defective. **v.3:** God had provided righteousness as a free gift through faith in Christ, yet they still pursued righteousness through their own endeavours. They would not 'submit' themselves to the claims and authority of Christ in obedience to the gospel. This would involve acknowledgement of failure and guilt in relation to a broken law, which proud, rebellious Jewish hearts refused. The practical lessons are clear. Zeal must be according to the truth of Scripture. Sincerity is not enough, for we may be sincerely mistaken. **David Newell:** *Evangelistic zeal without an accurate knowledge of the doctrine of the gospel is dangerous. We must equally avoid a head knowledge of divine truth which lacks warmth of affection and energy. Correct doctrine combined with devotion is the Scriptural ideal (John 2.17). The prayer that saints might be preserved from 'hot heads [ignorant zeal] and cold feet [mere intellectual knowledge]' had the right idea.*

The Definition of the Gospel (10.4-13)

Paul now explains the defective understanding of the Jew. **v.4:** For the believer, Christ is the 'end of the law' unto righteousness. The word 'end' (*telos*) can mean 'goal' or 'fulfilment' in which case the teaching is that Christ has completely met the law's requirements and paid its penalty in full (Matthew 5.17). But *telos* also means 'termination', which is the best meaning here. Christ is the end of the law as a means of being made right with God (Acts 13.38-39; Galatians 3.23-25). As a Pharisee, Saul claimed an outward, legal righteousness all of his own, but it could not make him right with God – only faith can (Philippians 3.9). Thus, Christ is the end of the Jews seeking to establish their own righteousness on the basis of law (v.3). **v.5:** In fact, the futility of seeking to attain righteousness by law-keeping is described by Moses in Leviticus 18.5. Whilst the promise of 'life' in the context refers to enjoying a peaceful and prosperous life in the land of promise, Paul applies the Scripture to the present day. The man that 'has done' or obeyed the precepts of the law (the whole past life being under review) must *continue* to live in obedience to them. The law demands *complete* and *continual* obedience – which is impossible (Galatians 3.10). **vv.6-7:** Thank God, life under faith is different! If the *law* says 'do and live', *faith* (personified) says 'believe and live'. Quoting from Deuteronomy 30.11-14, Paul illustrates the point. Moses speaks of Israel being re-gathered from a future scattering and captivity amongst the nations. Upon their return, there would be no need to ascend to heaven or cross the sea to find, hear and obey the law. They already had it! It was in their mouths and hearts. In application to the gospel, there is no need (if it were possible) to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down – He has already come. Neither is there any need to descend into the 'depths' (*abyss*, considered to be the netherworld from which the dead were raised) to bring Christ up – He has already risen. God has done the work. Salvation is thus freely available to all through faith in Christ. It is neither inaccessible or unavailable, but 'near'. **v.8:** What then does faith say? The 'word of (concerning) faith' has been preached. God has brought the word of the gospel directly to us. It is easily *communicated* (mouth) and *understood* (heart).

vv.9-10: The gospel requires confession from the mouth and belief in the heart. The order of 'confess' and 'believe' changes from v.9 to v.10. v.9 follows the order of *exposition* (as in Deuteronomy 30.14); v.10 follows the order of *experience*. To 'confess' means to 'speak the same thing' (*homologeō*). This is a declaration (or cry) Godward that we agree with His assessment of His Son – He is Lord (deity and supreme authority). Confession manward will soon follow by word and deed. **AT Robertson:** *No Jew would do this who had not really trusted Christ, for Kurios in the LXX is used of God [and compare John 9.22 for the cost involved]. No Gentile would do it who had not ceased worshipping the emperor as Kurios. The word Kurios was and is the touchstone of faith.* But there must also be a heart belief that God has raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. This is not a matter of intellectual *appreciation* but *conviction*. It is personal and total confidence in the risen Christ as Lord and Saviour. And not just belief in the resurrection of Christ, but that **God** has raised Him – *God is satisfied with the work Christ did and therefore the sinner can be satisfied with a work that satisfies God (Albert McShane)*. These are the simple conditions of salvation which provide a righteous standing before God. Paul himself is the supreme example of such a conversion (Acts 9.5-6). **v.11:** Returning to Isaiah 28.16 (cf. 9.33), Paul reminds his readers that Christ is not only *easily* accessible, but *equally* accessible to all – this gospel goes out to the 'whosoever'. **v.12:** Christ is sufficient for all, whether Jew or Gentile. In 3.22, there is 'no difference' in terms of *guilt* for 'all have

sinned'. Here, there is no difference in terms of *grace* – Christ the Lord is rich in mercy (Ephesians 2.4) providing salvation to all who 'call upon Him'. **v.13:** The quotation from Joel 2.32 shows that all who make a cry of appeal in faith to the Lord Jesus will be saved. In the context of Joel, salvation is eschatological from the coming wrath.

The Duty of the Preacher (10.14-15)

The order of these statements is instructive. First of all, God *sends* preachers to *herald* the gospel. The message is *heard* with the ears, *believed* in the heart and results in the *cry* (confession) of faith. **v.14:** The preacher (*kerusso*) 'heralds' the message. In ancient times the herald was the major means of transmitting news through public proclamations in the city square or marketplace. Their role was to pass on an authoritative message from a superior (cf. 1.1). **v.15:** Preachers must be 'sent' by direct divine commission, whether of the Lord Jesus (John 17.18, 20.21; Galatians 1.1) or the Holy Spirit (Acts 13.2-4). Of course, every believer has received such a commission (Matthew 28.18-20). In quoting Isaiah 52.7 Paul draws attention to the privilege of preaching. The context in Isaiah concerns glad tidings that Babylon had fallen being announced in Jerusalem to signal the end of captivity. 'Beautiful' means 'timely', the moment when something is at its best, 'flourishing' or in 'full bloom'. What fragrance the message of deliverance must have brought to the hearers in Jerusalem, and so it is the same with the one who hears and believes the gospel. **Cottrell:** *After such a long, hot, dusty journey, the messenger's feet would be the least attractive part of his appearance. But the messenger's news was so good that even his feet looked beautiful to those receiving his word!*

The Disobedience of Israel (10.16-21)

v.16: Sadly, very few Jews had believed the gospel justifying Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. This is just as it was in Isaiah's day when many Jews rejected the voice of God through the prophets (Isaiah 53.1; Acts 7.51-52). **v.17:** This verse appears to be out of place, but the word 'hearing' (*akoe*) is the same in Greek as 'report' (v.16). The Jews may not have believed the gospel (report), but it must still be preached in order that some might come to faith (believe). In evangelism, great importance must therefore be placed, not on man's devices, but on the preaching of the living, powerful 'word of God' (1 Peter 1.23). Some manuscripts have 'word of Christ' signifying the word *about* Him. His Person is a key component of our preaching (v.9)! **v.18:** Paul concludes the chapter by asking two questions. Firstly, had Israelites refused the gospel because they hadn't *heard* the message? **No!** Just as creation's testimony to the glory of God is universal (see Psalm 19.4), so the gospel had reached every Jewish community throughout the diaspora (cf. Acts 2.5). **v.19:** Secondly, 'Did not Israel know?' Paul is probably asking whether the nation understood that God would reach out in salvation to the Gentiles whilst they resisted. **Yes, they did!** For example, Moses had said (Deuteronomy 32.21) that Israel would be stirred to 'jealousy' and 'angered' by God's blessing of those who were 'no people' (the Gentiles had no special covenant relationship with God) and a 'foolish nation' (the Gentiles were idolatrous with no knowledge of God, 2.20). God's blessing of the Gentiles was designed to give Israel a desire to return to Him (cf. 11.14). **v.20:** At the risk of angering Israel, Isaiah had *courageously* prophesied that the Gentiles who did not *seek* or *ask* after God would nevertheless find Him (Isaiah 65.1). **v.21:** Sadly, the same could not be said of Israel. Though God was patient and persistent ('all day long') in His entreaty towards them, they remained 'disobedient' (unbelieving), even 'gainsaying' (contradicting) all that God said. The nation is therefore marked by the opposite of a confessing mouth and believing heart (v.9).