

Romans 10:14-21
June 7, 2015

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Since it's been a couple of weeks since we've studied a portion of Chapter 10, I thought it would be helpful to refresh our memories regarding Paul's thoughts regarding the unbelieving Jews.

You would think that Israel as a nation would have been eagerly expecting the arrival of their Messiah and been prepared to receive Him. For centuries they had known the Old Testament prophecies and had practiced the Law, which was "a schoolmaster" to lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:24). God had sought to prepare the nation, but when Jesus Christ came, they rejected Him. "He came unto His own [world] and His own [people] received Him not" (John 1:11). To be sure, there was a faithful remnant in the nation that looked for His arrival, such as Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25–38); but the majority of the people were not ready when He came.

How did Paul explain this tragic event? He gives several reasons why Israel rejected their Messiah:

1. ***They did not feel a need for salvation (v. 1).*** Israel would have been happy for political salvation from Rome, but she did not feel she needed spiritual salvation from her own sin.
2. ***They were zealous for God, but their zeal was not based on knowledge (v. 2).*** They thought their good works and religious deeds would save them, when actually their practices were keeping them from being saved. Certainly many of them were sincere and devout, but sincerity and devotion will never save the soul.
3. ***They were proud and self-righteous (v. 3).*** They would not submit to God. They were proud of their own good works and religious self-righteousness, and would not admit their sins and trust the Savior. Paul had made the same mistake before he met the Lord.
4. ***They misunderstood their own Law (vv. 4–13).*** Everything about the Jewish religion pointed to the coming Messiah—their sacrifices, priesthood, temple services, religious festivals, and covenants. Their Law told them they were sinners in need of a Savior. But instead of letting the Law bring them to Christ (Gal. 3:24), they worshiped their Law and rejected their Savior. The Law was a signpost, pointing the way. But it could never take them to their destination. The Law cannot give righteousness; it only leads the sinner to the Savior who can give righteousness.

Today, we will be studying v.14-21, in which Paul reminds his readers that the Israelites' rejection of the Messiah was prophesied by several prophets.

Transition: From our vantage point, we have been watching Paul's heart bleed for his people. He so badly wants to see them saved. So I have invited us to observe how Paul attempted to reach lost souls so that each of us can sharpen our own skillsets to reach lost people for Christ. To that end, I have suggested that ***every Christian can grow to become effective evangelists by observing the PRINCIPLES Paul used to reach his lost audience.*** To get us started Paul uses

v.13 as his springboard to expound on God's promise of salvation to "everyone who calls" on Him.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Rom 10:14-21]

V.14:

- How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

V.15:

- And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

V.16:

- But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

V.17:

- Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

V.18:

- But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

V.19:

- Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."

V.20:

- And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."

V.21:

- But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

Process Observations/Questions:

- Q 14-15: Paul uses basic logic on how a person gets to "call on the name of the Lord." What was it? [Someone has to be called to "preach" the good news, so that a person can "hear" the good news, so that they can "believe" in the Messiah, so that they can "call" on the Lord.]
- Q 14-15: The only way unbelieving Jews can be saved is by calling on the Lord. But before they can call on Him, they must believe. So what did the Jews have to believe about Jesus in order to be saved? [This meant believing that Jesus Christ of Nazareth truly is the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel. It also meant believing in His death and resurrection (Rom. 10:9-10).]
- Q 16-17: According to Isaiah, where does faith come from? [In order to believe, they must hear the Word, for it is the Word that creates faith in the heart of the hearer (Rom. 10:17).]
- Q: Why is hearing the Word so important? [It's living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword! Heb 4:12. This is why sharing Scripture is so important. The Word is alive and has great power when we're sharing by the leadership of the Holy Spirit.]

- Q 18-21: The Jews believed that God had rejected them, but Paul knew better. They had not only rejected Christ, but they also rejected the Prophets. Who are some of the prophets Paul quotes to defend his position? [Have class list how the Israelites rejected the prophets]
 - V 18: In case you're thinking, "But how do you know that Israel really heard?" His reply would have been Psalm 19:4, a psalm that emphasizes the revelation of God in the world.
 - V 19: When Israel rejected her Messiah, God sent the Gospel to the Gentiles that they might be saved. This was predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21. One reason why God sent the Gospel to the Gentiles was that they might provoke the Jews to jealousy.
 - V 20: The Prophet Isaiah predicted too that God would save the Gentiles (Isa. 65:1).
- Q 21: What do you learn about God in this verse? [God was stretching out His arms of love to His disobedient people, **yearning over them**, and **asking them to return**. ***God's favor to the Gentiles did not change His love for the Jews.***]
- Q: What are some principles that you see in these verses that could help us be more effective evangelists?
 - V.14 People need to hear the gospel to have an opportunity to respond to it.
 - V.16 Remember that not everyone will accept the good news.
 - V.18-21 People can hear the gospel over many years and still miss it.
 - V.21 Never give up on those who are resistant to accepting Christ as their Savior!

LOOK:

Q: What do we learn about God?

A: He never gives up on anyone who is separated from Him. He will keep His arms wide open until a person chooses to commit to His Son, Jesus.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 548–550). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Remedy for Their Rejection (Rom. 10:14–17)

This passage is often used as the basis for the church's missionary program, and rightly so, but its first application is to the nation of Israel. The only way unbelieving Jews can be saved is by calling on the Lord. But before they can call on Him, they must believe. For the Jew, this meant believing that Jesus Christ of Nazareth truly is the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel. It also meant believing in His death and resurrection (Rom. 10:9–10). But in order to believe, they must hear the Word, for it is the Word that creates faith in the heart of the hearer (Rom. 10:17). This meant that a herald of the Word must be sent, and it is the Lord who does the sending. At this point, Paul could well have been remembering his own call to preach the Word to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1–3).

The quotation in Romans 10:15 is found in Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15. The Nahum reference had to do with the destruction of the Assyrian Empire, the hated enemies of the Jews. Nineveh was their key city, a wicked city to which God had sent Jonah some 150 years before Nahum wrote. God had patiently dealt with Nineveh, but now His judgment was going to fall. It was this “good news” that the messenger brought to the Jews, and this is what made his feet so beautiful.

Isaiah used this statement for a *future* event—the return of Christ and the establishing of His glorious kingdom. “Thy God reigneth!” (Read Isa. 52:7–10.) The messenger with the beautiful feet announced that God had defeated Israel's enemies and that Messiah was reigning from Jerusalem.

But Paul used the quotation in a *present* application: the messengers of the Gospel taking the Good News to Israel today. The “peace” spoken of is “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1) and the peace Christ has effected between Jews and Gentiles by forming the one body, the church (Eph. 2:13–17). The remedy for Israel's rejection is in hearing the Word of the Gospel and believing on Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53:1 was Paul's next quotation, proving that not all of Israel would obey His Word. This verse introduced one of the greatest messianic chapters in the Old Testament. Traditionally, Jewish scholars have applied Isaiah 53 to the nation of Israel rather than to Messiah; but many ancient rabbis saw in it a picture of a suffering Messiah bearing the sins of His people (see Acts 8:26–40). In Isaiah's day, the people did not believe God's Word, nor do they believe it today. John 12:37–41 cites Isaiah 53:1 to explain how the nation saw Christ's miracles and still refused to believe. Because they would not believe, judgment came on them and they could not believe.

Note that trusting Christ is not only a matter of believing, but also obeying. Not to believe on Christ is to disobey God. God “commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). Romans 6:17 also equates “believing” and “obeying.” True faith must touch the will and result in a changed life.

We must never minimize the missionary outreach of the church. While this passage relates primarily to Israel, it applies to all lost souls around the world. They cannot be saved unless they call on the Lord Jesus Christ. But they cannot call unless they believe. Faith comes by hearing, so they must hear the message. How will they hear? A messenger must go to them with the message. But this means that God must call the messenger and the messenger must be sent. What a privilege it is to be one of His messengers and have beautiful feet!

As I was writing this chapter, my phone rang and one of the businessmen in our city reported another soul led to Christ. My caller had had serious spiritual problems a few years ago and I was able to help him. Since that time, he has led many to Christ, including some in his office. His phone call was to give me the good news that one of his associates had led a friend to Christ, another miracle in a spiritual chain reaction that has been going on for three years now. My friend has beautiful feet, and wherever he goes he shares the Good News of the Gospel.

Some of us share the news here at home, but others are sent to distant places. In spite of some closed doors, there are still more open doors for the Gospel than ever before; and we have better tools to work with. My friend, the late Dr. E. Meyers Harrison, veteran missionary and professor of missions, says that there are four reasons why the church must send out missionaries: (1) *the command from above*—“go ye into all the world” (Mark 16:15); (2) *the cry from beneath*—“send him to my father’s house” (Luke 16:27); (3) *the call from without*—“come over and help us” (Acts 16:9); and (4) *the constraint from within*—“the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14).

There remains a third aspect of Israel’s rejection for Paul to discuss.

The Results of Their Rejection (Rom. 10:18–21)

There are three results, and each of them is supported by a quotation from the Old Testament.

Israel is guilty (v. 18). Someone might have argued with Paul: “But how do you know that Israel really heard?” His reply would have been Psalm 19:4, a psalm that emphasizes the revelation of God in the world. God reveals Himself in creation (Ps. 19:1–6) and in His Word (Ps. 19:7–11). The “Book of Nature” and the “Book of Revelation” go together and proclaim the glory of God. Israel had the benefit of both books, for she saw God at work in nature and she received God’s written Word. Israel heard, but she would not *heed*. No wonder Jesus often had to say to the crowds, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!”

The message goes to the Gentiles (vv. 19–20). What marvelous grace! When Israel rejected her Messiah, God sent the Gospel to the Gentiles that they might be saved. This was predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21. Paul had mentioned this truth before in Romans 9:22–26. One reason why God sent the Gospel to the Gentiles was that they might provoke the Jews to jealousy (Rom. 10:19; 11:11). It was an act of grace both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. The Prophet Isaiah predicted too that God would save the Gentiles (Isa. 65:1).

As you study the New Testament, you discover that “to the Jew first” is a ruling principle of operation. Jesus began His ministry with the Jews. He forbade His disciples to preach to the Gentiles or the Samaritans when He sent them on their first tour of ministry (Matt. 10:1–6). After His resurrection, He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem and to start their ministry there (Luke 24:46–49; Acts 1:8). In the first seven chapters of Acts, the ministry is to Jews and to Gentiles who were Jewish proselytes. But when the nation stoned Stephen and persecution broke loose, God sent the Gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8:1–8), and then to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

The Jewish believers were shocked when Peter went to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1–18). But he explained that it was God who sent him and that it was clear to him that Jews and Gentiles were both saved the same way—by faith in Christ. But the opposition of the legalistic Jews was so great that the churches had to call a council to discuss the issue. The record of this council is given in Acts 15. Their conclusion was that Jews and Gentiles were all saved by faith in Christ, and that a Gentile did not have to become a Jewish proselyte before he could become a Christian.

God still yearns over His people (v. 21). This quotation is from Isaiah 65:2. “All day long” certainly refers to this present “day of salvation” or day of grace in which we live. While Israel

as a nation has been set aside, individual Jewish people can be saved and are being saved. The phrase “all day long” makes us think of Paul’s ministry to the Jews in Rome when he arrived there as a prisoner. “From morning till evening” Paul expounded the Scriptures to them and sought to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 28:23). Through Paul, God was stretching out His arms of love to His disobedient people, yearning over them, and asking them to return. God’s favor to the Gentiles did not change His love for the Jews.

God wants to use us to share the Gospel with both Jews and Gentiles. God can use our feet and our arms just as He used Paul’s. Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem and longed to gather His people in His arms! Instead, those arms were stretched out on a cross where He willingly died for Jews and Gentiles alike. God is long-suffering and patient “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Will God’s patience with Israel wear out? Is there any future for the nation? Yes, there is, as the next chapter will show.

Witmer, J. A. (1985). Romans. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 481–482). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

10:14–15. After proclaiming God’s gracious offer in Christ, Paul confronted the natural questions that arise, each additional question building on the key verb from the preceding question. God’s promise of salvation to “everyone who calls” on Him (v. 13) begins the process. **How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in?** Previously, to call on the Lord was equated with trusting Him or believing in Him (cf. vv. 11 and 13), but here it follows the believing. When one believes in Christ, he “calls” on Him. Believing, in turn, is based on hearing, and hearing is based on **someone preaching ... and how can they preach unless they are sent?** (Since the Gr. word *kēryssō*, “preach,” means “to be a herald, to announce,” it is not limited to proclamation from a pulpit.) Carrying God’s gracious offer involves human beings whom God has brought to Himself and then uses as His heralds. They share God’s message of salvation because He will save everyone who calls on His name. Paul quoted from Isaiah 52:7 concerning the eagerness of the bearers of **good news**. Those who bear it have **beautiful ... feet**, that is, their message is welcome. In Isaiah 52:7 the messenger announced to Judah that God had ended their Exile in Babylon (cf. Isa. 40:9–11). But Paul applied Isaiah 52:7 to the Jews of his day to whom the gospel was being given.

3. ISRAEL’S REJECTION (10:16–21).

10:16–18. Paul had made it clear that God’s gracious offer of righteousness by faith was given to all, Jews and Gentiles alike (cf. v. 12). His focus in this chapter, however, has been on the people of Israel and their response to that offer (cf. v. 1). Therefore when he wrote, **But not all the Israelites** (the Gr. text simply says “all”) **accepted the good news**, he obviously had in mind the Jews’ failure to respond. (“Accepted” translates *hypēkousan*, a compound of the verb “to hear.” It means “to hear with a positive response,” and so “to obey, to submit to.”) This is borne out by Paul’s confirming quotation of **Isaiah 53:1: Lord, who has believed our message?** This failure of the Jews to respond to the good news was true in Jesus’ days on earth (John 12:37–41) and in Paul’s day as well. However, the indefinite “all” of the Greek text (Rom. 10:16) is appropriate, because the response to the gospel among the Gentiles was also far less than total. Paul explained, **Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message** (lit., “is out

from hearing”; cf. v. 14) **and the message is heard through the word of Christ** (lit., “and the hearing is through the saying [*rhēmatos*; cf. v. 17] concerning Christ”). The Greek word *akoē* (“hearing”) can mean the thing heard (the message; v. 16) or the act or sense of hearing (v. 17).

Someone, however, might insist that the Jews were not given adequate opportunity to hear the message. So, Paul said, **But I ask** (“say”), **Did they not hear?** He then quoted Psalm 19:4, concerning God’s general revelation in the cosmic heavens (cf. Rom. 1:18–20). However, that psalm also discusses God’s special revelation in the Old Testament (Ps. 19:7–11). Paul’s obvious answer to his question is that Israel had ample opportunity by both general and special revelation to respond to God. Certainly she heard.

10:19–21. With these verses the argument takes a turn. The apostle anticipated another objection. Someone might argue, “Yes, Israel heard but she did not understand that God purposed to offer righteousness by faith to all mankind, including Gentiles.” So Paul wrote, **Again I ask** (lit., “But I say”), **did Israel not understand?** (*egnō*, “know”) His answer this time was from two Old Testament quotations, one as early as **Moses** (Deut. 32:21) **and** the second by **Isaiah** (Isa. 65:1). Both Old Testament leaders wrote about God’s turning to the Gentiles, whom the Jews thought had **no understanding** (*asynetō*, “senseless”; cf. Rom. 1:21, 31). And yet **concerning Israel**, God has been gracious in spite of her disobedience (a quotation of Isa. 65:2). Israel’s continuing rebellious and unbelieving disobedience was judged by God’s turning to the Gentiles (Rom. 10:20; cf. Acts 8:1–8, 10). At the same time God has not withheld salvation from Jews. He has **held out His hands**, imploring them to return to Him.