

3) God's word and justice with regard to Gentiles have not failed — 9:22–33

9:22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

9:23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

9:24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

9:25 As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'" (Hos. 2:23)

9:26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." (Hos. 1:10)

In verses 25 and 26 Paul finds an OT parallel between the circumstances of the Gentiles in his day and a time in Israel's history when the blessings of God were being withheld. In the eighth century BC, in the days of the prophet Hosea, God said that He would *no longer* show love to the rebellious northern tribes of Israel because of their gross sin (Hos. 1:6); instead they would face judgment. God even said that they were not His people and He was not their God (Hos. 1:9). But when we get to Hosea Ch.2 we learn that that was not the final word. There would come a day when those who did not receive mercy would be loved (Ro. 9:25; Hos. 2:23). Those who are not God's people would be called sons of the living God (Ro. 9:26; Hos. 1:10). What was true of them is applicable to any who are in the same condition as they were (Hodge, 326, 327). It is God's nature to make those who are not His people into sons. Thus it should not surprise anyone that the Gentiles were being saved and receiving the blessings of salvation promised to Israel.

9:27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; (Isa. 10:22)

9:28 for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly." (Isa. 10:23)

9:29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, we would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah." (Isa. 1:9)

Paul now turns from the inclusion of the Gentiles to the exclusion of the Jews. Romans 9:27–28 quotes from the book of Isaiah which also has a historical background of national apostasy in the eighth century BC, although Isaiah addressed the southern kingdom of Judah.

Isaiah 10:22–23 (Ro. 9:27–28) predicted the depletion of the people of Israel by the armies of Assyria, God's instrument of judgment at that time. Though Israel had vast numbers of people (like the sand of the sea), only a remnant would be spared from the wrath of God. If God had not saved them, the whole nation would have been utterly destroyed, just like Sodom and Gomorrah were obliterated (Isa. 1:9).

The significance of the quotes from Hosea and Isaiah lies in who is included in God's salvation and who is not. Those who are not called God's people will be called His people, and many in the nation of Israel would not be saved.

9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

9:31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

9:32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

9:33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." (Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16)

Verses 30–33 form the conclusion of Paul's argument. Paul is asking, "What can we conclude about the reception of the gospel by the Gentiles and its rejection by the Jews?"

That which in all human probability would not occur, did! The Gentiles who were *not* looking for righteousness are the ones who attained it and the Jews who tried to attain righteousness (the "law of righteousness" means "the principle of righteousness," not the law of Moses), didn't. Why? . . . because they tried to attain by their own strength, not by faith. They pursued morals, but they refused to submit to the method of justification that God proposed—justification by faith.

The whole scenario is topsy-turvy. The Gentiles are elsewhere described as lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Tim. 3:2–4); they are separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12). The Gentiles weren't seeking God or moral purity, but when they heard the gospel of justification by faith in Christ and they believed it, they ended up receiving righteousness that they weren't pursuing.

The Jews, on the other hand, were entrusted with the word of God (Ro. 3:2); they had the temple, the law, the promises, and most importantly, the Christ. And yet they stumbled over Christ, the Rock that the Lord placed in Zion (Jerusalem), who is the foundation of true faith and life (Mk. 12:10 cf. Acts 4:11, and my notes on 1 Pet. 2:6–8).

The Human Responsibility (10)

In Chapter 10 Paul does not retract or soften his comments on predestination (chapter 9), but he does show that no one can make God responsible for his sin and unbelief. Although God is sovereign, we alone are responsible for our lost condition.

"The point to observe is that the same Paul who insists so strongly in Romans 8 and 9 that God is unconditionally sovereign insists no less strongly in Romans 10 that people must believe in their hearts and confess gospel truth with their mouths if they are to be saved, and lays on the conscience of believers the imperative to bring this good news to those who have not heard. Any theology that attempts to diminish God's sovereignty by appealing to human freedom is as profoundly un-Pauline as any theology that somehow diminishes human responsibility and accountability by appealing to some crude, divine fatalism" (Carson, *For the Love of God*, vol. I, Aug. 20).

The Gospel is Accessible to All (10:1–15)

10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

10:2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

Paul's prayer for Israel's salvation in verse 1 is the result of his anguish in Romans 9:1–5. The sovereignty of God does not hinder prayer; rather it allows people to pray with hope. If God was not sovereign in salvation, none would be saved, but because He has chosen men for salvation, we can pray with hope knowing that some will respond.

The Jewish people had a great zeal for God (cf. Paul's own experience—Acts 7:58–8:3; 26:5; Gal. 1:14), but not in accordance with knowledge. Though they were not completely ignorant about God, their knowledge was misapplied and they lacked wisdom and enlightenment. They focused on trying to achieve righteousness through the law but fell short of the knowledge of the righteousness that is found in Christ (cf. Ro. 1:17).

10:3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. (cf. 9:30–32)

10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Justification is the declaration that one has a right standing before God. Righteousness is the basis on which the declaration of justification rests. Those who have righteousness (either personal or imputed) are justified. Since we have no righteousness of our own, nothing we can do will meet the demands of the law. Therefore, God's righteousness is necessary if we are to be justified. However, instead of accepting God's righteousness, Israel strived to establish its own through obedience to the law.

The connection of verse 4 to verse 3 is difficult to understand and is dependent upon what is meant by the ambiguous expression, "the *end* of the law."

This could have several meanings:

1) "End" could refer to the object to which something leads. In other words, this could be saying that the law was not intended to be the means of attaining justification, but was to lead men to Christ (Gal. 3:24; Col. 2:17; Heb. 9:9). "Christ is the end of the law"; He is the destination to where the law leads.

2) The word "end" may also mean completion or fulfillment. In this case, verse 4 means that Christ is the end of the law since the whole law points to Him and is fulfilled in Him (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 7:4).

3) "End" could also mean termination. Christ puts an end to the law. Therefore, verse 4 would mean that law as a standard of justification was abolished in Christ (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Gal. 3:10–12; Ro. 6:14; 7:4–6).

4) It could also be a combination of 2 and 3. Like Matthew 5:17, Jesus is the point of culmination of the law of Moses; He is its goal (view 2). However, He is also its end in that He brought to a close that period of time when the law would be the rule of life for God's people (view 3; Moo, *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 207).

All four interpretations find support in scripture elsewhere.

Even though Christ is the end of the law, Paul makes it clear that He is only the end of the law *to those who believe*. The unbelieving world is still judged by the law.

10:5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

The contrast between righteousness secured by obedience to the law and God's righteousness received by faith in Christ (10:3–4) reminds Paul of the words of Moses. Paul's intent is to show that righteousness obtained through the law is impossible, though theoretically possible.

In Leviticus 18:5 (quoted in Ro. 10:5) Moses tells the people that the one who meets the standards of the law shall live, for he has nothing in him that would deserve the condemnation of God. He will enjoy the life and blessings that God intends for him. In other words, the righteousness that comes from the law is an achievement gained by any who can keep it perfectly. As Piper comments, "The principle that God's primal and ultimate demand is perfect faith with no sin is absolutely crucial; none of the Old Testament sacrifices, or the cross of Christ, makes sense without it. Righteousness by perfect faith and no sin would make one perfectly suited for eternal life. . . . But no one has ever measured up to this standard—except one." (sermon by John Piper, Ro 10:5–13, May 18, 2003—John Piper. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org)

10:6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down), 10:7 or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." 10:8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

Righteousness based on faith is now personified and speaks in 10:6–8.

Although perfect faith and obedience to the law ends in life, Paul had already pointed out that achieving righteousness through human merit is an impossibility (cf. Gal. 3:11; Romans 3:9–10; 3:23), for to stumble in one point of the law makes us guilty of everything (Ja. 2:10; cf. Gal 5:3; Matt. 5:19; 1Kings 8:46). All efforts to live a perfectly righteous life only lead to despair. Therefore, the voice of "righteousness which is of faith" also needs to be heard.

The thoughts of going into heaven or ascending into the abyss to achieve something are almost proverbial statements that stress the impossibility of the action (see. Ps. 139:6, 8–9; Prov. 24:7; Amos 9:2).

These words are those of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:

- 11 "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.
- 12 "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'
- 13 "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'
- 14 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

In relation to the law, Moses was trying to prevent the Israelites from evading responsibility in doing the will of God. God does not require the impossible. He doesn't demand that they climb up to heaven or descend into the abyss to acquire knowledge of His will. It was perfectly accessible right where they were.

In the same way, no one needs to go into heaven and bring Christ down, or go to the grave to raise Jesus from the dead in order to hear the message and secure righteousness through faith. Just as God brought the word near to Israel so that they might hear and obey them, so He brought His word near to both Jews and Gentiles so that they might know Him through His Son, Jesus Christ (Moo, 653).

Everything has been done for us. No one can plead ignorance. God sent His Son for us—no one needed to go get Him. It was also God who raised Him from the dead. Man did nothing. All we have comes freely from God and, as a result, righteousness by faith is accessible to all who believe.

God's word was near in both the Old and New Testaments. However, unlike righteousness obtained through obedience to the law, righteousness which is received by faith assures us that the blessings of eternal life are attainable.

Hence, the voice of righteousness in verse 8 tells us the same thing that Moses told the Israelites, namely, that "the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (Ro. 10:8; cf. Deut. 30:14). And, lest someone misunderstand, Paul clarifies that "the word" he is talking about is the word of faith that he and others have been preaching.

The contents of the word of faith are found in verses 9 and 10.

**10:9 "that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved,
10:10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."**

We must confess that Jesus is Lord, that is, we must openly recognize His authority and His lordship over us and all creation (Ro. 1:4; 14:9; I Cor. 12:3; Eph. 1:20–23; Phil. 2:11; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; 10:36; Heb. 1:3; I Pet. 3:21–22). We must also believe that God raised Him from the dead. By believing in the resurrection we are acknowledging that Jesus is all that He claimed to be, for through the resurrection God placed His stamp of approval upon the person of Jesus, His ministry, and His teaching.

Verse 10 provides the rationale between confession, faith and salvation. The reason that faith is necessary is because faith results in righteousness. Romans 4:3 says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." The reason confession is necessary is because confession results in salvation. In Matthew 10:32 Jesus said, "everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven." As Carson says, "this will vary in boldness, fluency, wisdom, sensitivity, and frequency from believer to believer; but consistently to disown Christ is to be disowned by Christ" (Carson, EBC, Matthew, 256).

However, as Carson points out, confession and belief are not two steps that happen independently of each other. "It would be closer to the apostles thought to say that the two lines are parallel—not because each says exactly the same thing as the other (they don't), but because each throws light on the other, clarifying the other, expounding a little what the other means. Faith in the heart without confession with the mouth thus becomes unbelievable; conversely, confession with the mouth that is merely formal and not generated by faith in the heart is not what the apostle has in mind either. Paul propounds the faith that generates confession; this confession is borne along by faith. Out of this faith/confession comes justification/salvation—again, overlapping categories, such that in Paul you can't have one without the other" (Carson, For the Love of God, vol. I, Aug. 20).

Paul next quotes Isaiah 28:16 to substantiate what he has just said, namely, that faith alone is the necessary requisite for salvation.

10:11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Isa. 28:16)

10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;

10:13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Joel 2:32)

These verses affirm two things:

- 1) Righteousness by faith is the method of salvation. When Paul says that "whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed" he is referring to deliverance at the time of judgment.
- 2) Righteousness by faith is universal in application—it is applied to *whoever* believes.

Verse 12 tells us what Paul means by "whoever" in verse 11; both Jew and Gentile are equally under Christ's dominion (the same Lord is Lord of all) and have equal access to the riches of His mercy (cf. 3:29–30). Anyone without exception, anywhere at any time, who calls upon the name of the Lord, will be saved.

The connection between Christ and God is implicit. In Joel 2:32 (quoted in Ro 10:13) it is clearly Yahweh (the LORD) whom the Jews called upon for salvation. He is the Lord of all (10:12). Yet, verse 9 makes it clear that the Lord is Jesus and calling upon Him results in salvation. To confess Jesus as Lord is stating our willing submission to His authority—an authority that rests in the fact that He is Yahweh.

10:14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

10:15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

Since salvation is available to all men, Paul turns to the responsibility of the believer toward the unsaved. "As invocation implies faith, as faith implies knowledge, knowledge instruction, and instruction an instructor, so it is plain that if God would have all men to call upon Him, He designed preachers to be sent to all, whose proclamation of mercy being heard, might be believed, and being believed might lead men to call upon the Lord and be saved" (Hodge, 346). God wills the end (the salvation of those whom He foreknows); He also wills the means to that end (that they come to faith as God empowers and uses our proclamation of the gospel).

The last part of verse 15 is a quote from Isaiah 52:7 which predicts a day when the one who brings the message of salvation will be heralded with great joy. The messenger's feet are beautiful for they carry an invaluable treasure of the richness of the blessings of God freely given to all who receive it.