

No Excuses

Romans 10:16-21

September 5th, 2010



The story said they had enjoyed a great meal and good fellowship. It was now late in the evening when they finally went to bed. After a few hours of sleep, Sherlock Holmes awoke. When he did, he nudged his friend, Dr. Watson, and said, "Look up in the sky and tell me what you see?" Dr. Watson looked up in the sky and said, "I see millions and millions of stars." Holmes said, "What does that tell you?" Dr. Watson said, "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions and millions of galaxies, and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I have deduced that it is about a quarter past three. Theologically, God is an all-powerful being, and we are small and very insignificant. Meteorologically, it is going to be a beautiful day tomorrow." Then he asked, "What does it tell you?" Holmes looked over at Watson and said, "Watson, someone has stolen our tent!"

Isn't it amazing how we don't all see the same thing? We are going to finish the 10th chapter of the book of Romans. Let me remind you the context is the human side of salvation. We know there is a chain in the human side of salvation that can be broken.

Scripture

"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?' So faith comes

from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Israel's Unbelief

Paul is coming to the end of his discussion of why Israel is not coming to faith in Jesus Christ. We can understand that God is responsible for a sinner's salvation and that He alone is to be glorified when a sinner turns from sin to faith. A sinner cannot take credit for his salvation. But that can lead some to believe that if a person doesn't come to Christ, then God is responsible for that person not coming to faith. But let's be clear right in the beginning; that isn't true. The Bible clearly teaches that God is responsible for man's salvation, but it equally teaches that man is responsible for his condemnation. If a sinner turns to Christ, God alone is to be glorified. If a sinner doesn't turn to Christ, the sinner alone is to be blamed. Paul is answering the question as to why Israel isn't being saved.

There are those who don't want to study chapters 9, 10, and 11. They do not see its importance since it's dealing with the Jews. It is very important because the Bible teaches that our salvation lies within the heart of a covenant keeping God. God has made a covenant with a people whom He foreknew and promised to bring them to eternal glory. Their thought is that if the Jewish people were God's covenant people in the Old Testament and they aren't coming to faith in Christ, then how can we rest assured that we, under the new covenant, will come to Christ? In other words, if God has failed His Old Testament people, how can we in the New

Testament trust Him to keep His word to us? That is what Paul is answering here.

In Romans 9, Paul told us that God isn't responsible for Israel's unbelief, but He is responsible for the remnant that does come to faith in Christ. Now he begins to talk about the Jew who does not believe. From the human side, in order for a person to be saved, one must be sent. Then, they must proclaim the good news. It must be heard and then believed. And then, they must call upon the name of the Lord. When they call upon the name of the Lord, they will be saved.

- **Not Obeyed the Gospel**

But the problem is that the Jews aren't calling upon the name of Jesus to be saved! Verse 16 says, "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*" This isn't talking about Gentiles, it is talking about Jews. Sure, there are Gentiles who do not believe the gospel, but keep this in context. Paul is dealing with the salvation of the Jewish nation. They have not all obeyed the gospel. Paul is saying there are very few who have believed the gospel. The vast majority has not obeyed the gospel. In Romans 1:5, Paul told us that he believed he had been called to be an apostle to bring about the obedience of faith for His sake among all of the nations. Now notice here in verse 16, he doesn't say the Jew doesn't believe the gospel. He said the Jew has not obeyed the gospel; this is important.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, the Bible says that when Jesus returns, He is coming in flaming fire and will take vengeance on those who don't know God as well as those who do not obey the gospel. In 1 Peter 4:17, it says that judgment will begin in the house of God. Then he said oops, if judgment begins in the house of God, how much worse will it be for those who do not obey the gospel? There are many churches that take the phrase, "obeyed the gospel" and turn the gospel into a faith plus works plan of salvation. That is not true. There are no works of man involved in salvation. Works are part of salvation, but the works included in salvation is

the work of God on our behalf! Salvation in Christ is not that you trust in your work for God, but it is trust in Christ's work for you on a cross.

What does it mean to obey the gospel? It means that you respond positively to what the gospel says is true. It says that Jesus died for our sin, was buried, and on the third day was raised again according to the Scripture, and was seen by men. The word "obey" is a compound word, **hypakouō**, meaning 'to be under in order to hear.' When someone obeys the gospel, they submit, they surrender, and they yield to the truth of the message. The truth of the message is that God crucified Christ in our place and He is the only hope we have of being made right with God. To obey the gospel is to commit, to surrender yourself, and to trust what Jesus did on the cross for you.

Faith Comes by Hearing Christ

That is why Paul can quote Isaiah 53:1. By the way, 700 years before Christ came, God gave Isaiah a vision of the Messiah hanging on a cross being crucified for the sin of humanity. But he began that prophesy with the statement, "*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*" Paul takes the first part of Isaiah's verse and makes it clear that the Jewish people have not believed what they have heard. They heard that their Messiah was crucified in their place. He did not come to be a political savior, but their spiritual savior, and they did not believe that. They didn't commit to that truth.

Now look what Paul does in verse 17. He takes us back to the human chain and says, "*For faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*" A person cannot be saved until they hear the word of Christ because there cannot be faith in a crucified Messiah until a sinner is confronted with that message. We have made faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ to mean that when a preacher preaches the content of the gospel, it brings about faith in a sinner's life. But grammatically, in the Greek language, Romans 10:17 is probably teaching that faith comes from hearing and hearing comes through Christ speaking

to the hearer when the gospel message is preached! Do you understand that? When we sit under anointed preaching, God takes the message of the gospel and Christ Jesus Himself breaks into people's hearts and lives and speaks to them in the gospel message.

That is why there can be no salvation unless the gospel is preached. In gospel preaching, God still breaks into the lives of sinners, even today! I know this to be true because I cannot tell you how many times I have been here after a message is over and some of you find me and say, "Preacher, God spoke to me today while you were preaching." I love to hear that! I don't want you to go home believing that I was the one who really talked to you. I want you to go home believing that God stepped into your life and personally spoke to you! Please don't ever let the divine side of salvation negate, minimize, or trivialize the human side of salvation. There will never be salvation until someone preaches who has been authorized by God to share the message! We aren't talking about ordained preachers, we are talking about people who have witnessed the battle of the cross 2000 years ago and are now willing to run to others and share the news that we have won. Jesus defeated sin, Satan, and death at the cross. Faith cannot happen until Christ speaks into the heart of the sinner.

- **Israel has Heard**

But the dilemma is that if faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, then I get it; I know why Israel isn't coming to salvation. It is because they haven't heard. But Paul introduces an excuse and then he blows it out of the water. People think that Jews aren't being saved because they haven't heard. Many believe the reason the world isn't getting saved is because they haven't heard yet. We use that excuse a lot in our lives. There have been many times I haven't done what I was told to do, and I really want to say I didn't hear you. Paul knew that in the Roman church they wanted to say that Israel didn't accept the Messiah because they haven't heard, but Paul will say they have heard. But let me be clear here, to obey means to submit, to yield, and to surrender to what you have

heard. So when a person commands someone to do something, you expect a response. If someone merely invites you to do something, there is no response necessary, but no response is a response.

That is how I am in my home. My kids are gone now, but when they were at home I didn't invite them to do a lot of things. I was the head of the household; I was their daddy. Up until a certain age, I told them what to do. When I told them what to do, I expected obedience. I expected a response. But I discovered that sometimes I had to repeat what I said to my family more than one time. I would catch myself saying something to my family and wouldn't get a response, so I would just assume they didn't hear me so I would say it again. If I still didn't get a response, I would again assume they didn't hear me so I would say it again. My wife and two children would team up against me to make me feel like I had a problem.

I kind of felt like the guy I heard who went to the doctor and talked about his wife's lack of hearing. He explained that every time he told his wife something she just didn't hear him and he didn't know what to do about it. The doctor told him to bring her in, but she said she didn't believe she had a problem, so she wouldn't go. So the doctor said, "You can gauge how bad her hearing is by a test. The next time you talk to your wife, if she doesn't hear you, immediately get within 15 feet of her and say it again. If she doesn't respond, then move in to 10 feet and say it again. If she doesn't hear you, get within 5 feet of her and say it again. This will help me gauge how bad her hearing problem is, and we will decide what to do." The husband was tickled to death! He goes home and into the living room and said to his wife, "Honey, what's for supper?" He hears nothing, so he moves to 15 feet and said, "What's for supper?" He then moves in to 10 feet and asked again, and still nothing. He finally moved 5 feet from her, looked straight into her face and said, "Honey, what's for supper?" She said, "For the fourth time, vegetable stew!"

My family believes that I have a problem, but I don't. I don't believe I have a problem because I can remember when my daughter would love to go to

bed, but didn't like to get up. She had to be at school at a certain time, and I would go upstairs into her bedroom and say, "Kiki, get up!" I would go back downstairs. I wouldn't hear anything going on upstairs, so I would go back up and say, "Kiki, get up!" I would go back downstairs, and then have to go back up a few minutes later and say it again. I would finally hear, "Dad, I heard you the first time!" I always said, "No, you did not hear me the first time because if you had, your feet would have been on the floor and not still under the covers!" If she had heard me, if she had *hypakoúō-ed* and submitted to what I said, she would have gotten out of the bed the first time!

My son wasn't any better. There were many times I was at a racetrack as his mechanic and he was supposed to be in staging. I would say, "Kory, get ready!" He would be over there with his boots on, but didn't have his jersey, chest protector, gloves, helmet, or goggles on. I would say again, "Kory, get ready!" A few minutes later, I look over and he is still in la la land! I would say it for the third time, and I would hear, "Dad, I heard you the first time!" My wife is the worst...but since she is my wife, I won't tell you any stories about her though!

- **Israel Rejects Christ**

Do you get this? If a person hears, there must be a response. Israel heard the gospel. How did Paul know? Under the leadership of God's Holy Spirit, he quotes Psalms 19:4, "*Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.*" Now this puzzles a lot of Christians. If you look up the Old Testament passages when a New Testament writer quotes it, sometimes you notice it isn't word for word. It used to bother me that they misquoted Scripture, but then I discovered they weren't misquoting it. You see, our English bibles are straight out of the Hebrew text. But when the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament, they didn't quote the Hebrew bible; they quoted the Greek version of the Old Testament. There are some who believe we should study everything in the original Greek and that translations are bad. But the New Testament writers didn't

quote the Hebrew Old Testament, they quoted the translation. You can trust your New American Standard, your English Standard Version, and your King James Version; it's ok. Now, Psalms 19:4 isn't talking about the preaching of the gospel. It is talking about how God has revealed himself to man in creation. The first thing we have to ask is if Paul is taking this out of context.

I have told you before that I have been to funerals where I want to stand up and yell because something was taken out of context, but I don't! I really got tested at the state fair. My wife and I had eaten fair food all week long. It was really good, but you get tired of that stuff. We were in the center of Freedom Hall and they had an establishment that advertised chicken, ribs, pork, corn on the cob, and mashed potatoes. It is my kind of eating, and it looked really good. We started making our way over there and I was already tasting the BBQ. We walked up to the place where you order and start to place the order. At about the same time, we looked over to our right and saw that this was a Christian establishment because there was a little wooden plaque that said, "And God said, let there be light, and light was." I am feeling kind of good because it was a Christian establishment. But that was just on the back, there was another piece of wood that made a platform, and sitting on that platform was a bottle of Milwaukee Light. I cannot tell you what came over me, but it started tingling in my toes. It came up my leg and got to about my throat, and I thought, *how dare you quote Genesis 1:3 to say that God spoke Milwaukee Light into being!* I wanted to take my hand and smash that bottle! I didn't because I thought it would look bad in the Courier Journal: "**Baptist preacher arrested for destruction of personal property.**" With everything that was in us, we kindly let those people know that we weren't going to give them our money for their food if they were going to take our bible out of context. As I walked away from that, God reminded me again how every Sunday morning there are those who stand in the pulpit and take His Word out of context.

It looks like Paul took something out of context here doesn't it? But listen to me, Paul has already told us in Romans chapters 1, 2, and 3 that God has revealed Himself in nature, and man has rejected the light he has been given. Natural revelation was given to the Gentiles. But Paul is not dealing with the Gentiles here, he is dealing with the Jews. Paul knew that the light of natural revelation had not been squashed, but completely revealed to all humanity. There isn't a place on the earth where a person has not heard there is a God, because creation; the stars, moon, sun, and earth sing out 24-7, "There is a God!" Paul is telling the church at Rome that there isn't a place where a Jew lives or gathers together where he has not heard the good news of Jesus Christ. He takes this principle from general revelation.

If you keep reading in Psalms 19, it perfectly speaks of natural revelation and then it goes into special revelation; the Law. Paul knew the Jew had heard the gospel, because many, many runners had been sent by God. Jesus Himself said that He wasn't going to the Gentile because He must go first to the lost house of Israel. Paul started the book of Romans by saying that he wasn't ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. Even though he was called to be a messenger to the Gentile, he never went into a city without first going to the synagogue and opening up the Scriptures and talking about the crucified Messiah. Paul was confident that there was no Jew in his day that could stand before God with the excuse of not having heard.

Listen to me, we need to quit making excuses for people who don't believe the gospel. Many of us want to blame God for the condemnation of our family members. We want to blame God, a preacher, a deacon, or someone in the church. Paul believed the Jew had heard the gospel, and on the Day of Judgment, he would have no excuse; he had heard.

That brings Paul to the second argument; maybe they didn't understand what they heard. Paul said oh yeah, they understand, because first they had Moses, and then they had Isaiah. He quotes the second part of Deuteronomy 32:21 in Romans 10:21b, *"I will make you jealous of those*

who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." Now, if you aren't looking these Scriptures up, you are missing out on a lot. Because if you go back and read the first part of that verse in Deuteronomy, Moses tells us that God said Israel had made Him jealous with what was not a god. So God was saying, *Israel, you took what wasn't a god and made me jealous, so here is what I am going to do. I am going to take a people who are not a people and I am going to make you jealous!* Paul is saying that ever since Moses, Israel has been carrying around, in their Scriptures, knowledge that the day would come when God would bring Gentiles into the family. God's purpose in bringing Gentiles into the family was to let Israel know that He was trying to make them jealous so they would turn to Him for salvation. And Israel still rejected Him!

Then Paul goes on to say that Isaiah was bold enough to say, *"I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."* Isaiah told Israel that God would bring Gentiles into the family. That is the purpose of the sending of the Messiah.

So why is Paul quoting these Scriptures? He is saying that Israel doesn't have an excuse for not understanding the gospel. There are some of us who want to believe that the reason so and so doesn't get saved is because they haven't heard, or because they don't understand it!

A Disobedient and Contrary People

In the last verse, Paul again quotes Isaiah, *"All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."* You see, this is the problem with Israel. The reason people aren't being saved is because they are disobedient and they are contrary. You want to believe that people are innocent. You want to believe that people don't know. You want to believe that if they just heard, they would believe. They can't believe until they hear, but even when they hear, it doesn't mean they will. We better get a grip on this as a church. People don't want to be saved. People don't want to bow their heart and submit to Jesus as Lord of their life. Oh yes, if you run up and down these streets and preach Jesus as Savior who will save

you from your sin but you can still live like you are, people will sign up! But when you present the gospel, it's not an invitation to accept, it's a command to obey. God breaks into the hearts and lives of people Himself with the truth that you must turn from self and sin and completely trust in the finished work of His Son on a cross. Man doesn't want to do that. Man is disobedient because he is contrary. The word, "*contrary*" means 'to speak against, to contradict.'

God Desires Your Salvation

You have to understand what is going on here; God is breaking into people's lives telling them they are bad, and people don't think they are bad. You poll the average lost person on the street about his condition, and let me tell you what he will say; he will pick out one of you and say, "I'm just as good as them." You don't know how many times I have heard that. I always say, "Are you as good as Jesus?" People want to believe that they aren't so bad that it alone takes grace and God's Son dying on a cross. Man wants to believe that all he needs is a little help, a little boost; just get him headed in the right direction and he will do the rest. Don't ever let anyone tell you that God doesn't desire the salvation of the nations! He tells us that He stands all day long with His hands outstretched to the Jewish people! The problem isn't with God, it is with them; they don't want to be saved.

So the question is do you want to be saved? I believe in our area, we are just like Jews in that we have special revelation. You have heard, and you know the truth. You cannot blame anyone but yourself. You are a disobedient and contrary person until, by an act of your will, you turn from sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You have no guarantees just because you were raised in church or you have heard the gospel. According to Romans 10, you can reject the spoken word of Christ. Don't make God repeat it because He may not; He owes you nothing, but He gave His all so that you could be His.

