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Andrew M. Davis

Class Notes

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## **Overcoming Israel's Excuses for Unbelief**

### **Romans 10**

#### I. Paul's Summation: A Stone Laid in Zion... Faith or Stumbling

*Romans 9:30-33* **What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. <sup>32</sup> Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." <sup>33</sup> As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."**

#### II. Paul's Earnest Prayer for the Jews

*Romans 10:1-4* **Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. <sup>3</sup> Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.**

Q: What does Paul's desire and prayer for unbelieving Israel teach you?

Q: How do you harmonize his clear teaching on God's sovereignty in election and salvation with this prayer?

Q: What does Paul say about their zeal for God? Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Q: What is the problem of zeal without knowledge? What are others examples in today's world of people with religious zeal without knowledge?

Q: What didn't they "know"? What was lacking?

Q: Why did they seek to establish their own righteousness? How did they try to do that? What is at the root of such an effort? Why is it completely unacceptable to God?

Piper: Here we have a Judaism that says, "We are born of Israelites. We do some law-keeping, better than the Gentiles, for sure. And what we don't succeed at there, we add some sacrifice, some forgiveness." And that mixture is then offered to God. "I got a little bit of merit and a good dose of grace and now we're in." PAUL UTTERLY REJECTS THAT!

Christianity says zero contribution to your justification. You bring zero works to your justification, and Christ brings total perfection to your justification, and that's why it corresponds to election. Election is totally without any condition. And so, he's developing a way of justification that parallels election. Election is unconditional, and justification, in its grounding and provision, is unconditional.

Q: How is Christ's parable of the "Pharisee and the Tax Collector" a good display of what this passage both rejects and accepts? How does the Pharisee seek to establish his own righteousness?

Q: What does Paul mean, "They did not submit to God's righteousness"?

Q: What does "Christ is the end of the law" mean in verse 4? Note: "end" can mean "purpose" or "perfection" or "termination". How is Christ the purpose of the Law? How is Christ the perfection of the Law? How is Christ the termination of the Law?

### III. Righteousness by Law vs. Righteousness by Faith

***Romans 10:5-13 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup> But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: <sup>9</sup> That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. <sup>11</sup> As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

Q: How does Paul say Moses describes the righteousness by law? What does Paul mean “will live by them”?

Q: How does that compare with the vital opening statement in this Book of Romans?

***Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."***

Q: Why is the “righteousness by the law” not possible to save anyone? How does it compare with this statement:

***Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.***

Q: How does Paul then describe the righteousness that is by faith? How do his statements connect with this passage in the Law?

***Deuteronomy 30:11-14 Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. <sup>12</sup> It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>13</sup> Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>14</sup> No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.***

Q: How does Paul marry the statement in Deuteronomy with the works of Christ to save us? How does it present Christ as “the end of the law so that there might be righteousness for everyone who believes”?

Q: Why is it vital to understand that the word of faith (the gospel of Christ) is near us... right there... in our mouths and in our hearts?

Q: What does verse 9 teach us about salvation? Paul seems to be saying, “It is not hard to be saved... all you have to do is \_\_\_\_\_”. Is it hard to be saved or not?

Martin Luther’s “Heidelberg Disputation”:

**18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.**

**25. He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.”**

**26. The law says, ‘do this,’ and it is never done. Grace says, ‘believe in this,’ and everything is already done.”.**

Q: How does Paul link belief and confession in verses 9 and 10? Why does he say "It is with your heart that you believe... it is with your mouth that you confess?"

Q: How does Paul go back to the earlier statement about the rock God lays in Zion (Romans 9:33). What is the link here?

Q: Why bring up the Jew/Gentile issue at this point? [That everyone gets saved the same way]

Q: What does it mean to "call upon the name of the Lord"?

#### IV. Missions Are Essential to God's Plan for Salvation

***Romans 10:14-15 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? 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!"***

Paul uses rhetorical questions here... They all imply a negative answer, like "No one can X, can they?" How could these questions be rephrased like that?

- 1) Before anyone can call on Jesus, they have to first believe in him.
- 2) Before anyone can believe in Jesus, they have to first hear of him.
- 3) Before anyone can hear of Jesus, someone has to preach to them.
- 4) Before anyone can preach Jesus to people, the preachers have to be sent

So...

- It is IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to be saved without calling on the name of the Lord Jesus
- AND...It is IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to call on Jesus if they don't first believe in him
- AND... It is IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to believe in Jesus if they don't first hear of him
- AND... It is IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to hear of Jesus without someone telling them
- AND... It is IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to tell them without first being sent

Q: How do Romans 10:1, and Romans 10:14-15 give clarity to all Christians concerning our role in the salvation of other people?

Q: How does this argue that, while it is our responsibility to understand God's sovereignty in salvation, election and reprobation are not our responsibility?

Q: Yet, how would knowing that there ARE unconverted elect help us in our prayers and missions?

**2 Timothy 2:10** *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

Q: How do these verses fit into Paul's addressing of "the Jewish problem" ... why do the overwhelming majority of Jewish people reject the gospel?

## V. Unbelieving Israel vs. Believing Gentiles

**Romans 10:16-21** *But not all the Israelites accepted (obeyed) the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" <sup>17</sup> Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

<sup>18</sup> *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." <sup>19</sup> 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." <sup>20</sup> 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."*

<sup>21</sup> *But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."*

Not all Israelites obeyed the gospel... and that was predicted! (Isaiah 53:1)

**Isaiah 53:1** *Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

Faith comes from hearing... at the moment of the proclamation of the gospel

**Romans 10:17** *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

Removing any excuses from Israel:

1. Excuse #1: We've never heard the message
2. Excuse #2: We didn't understand it
3. Excuse #3: God didn't reveal himself to us because we didn't seek him
4. Excuse #4: God has given up on us

### Excuse #1: We've never heard the message

***Romans 10:18 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."***

The message has gone out... widely!!

***Romans 15:18-24 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done--<sup>19</sup> by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.***

Paul there is claiming that he has preached the gospel from Jerusalem to modern-day Yugoslavia, right across from Italy... an amazing achievement! But he says more:

***<sup>20</sup> It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.<sup>21</sup> Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."<sup>22</sup> This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.<sup>23</sup> But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you,<sup>24</sup> I plan to do so when I go to Spain.***

Paul has so saturated the northern region of the Mediterranean Sea with the gospel that there was no more place for him to work

***Colossians 1:23 This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.***

Note that Paul's usual procedure was to go to the Jews in every locale first, to the synagogue first, and reason with them from the Scriptures

God's ultimate purpose is to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. And that is exactly what will happen!

***Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.***

### Excuse #2: We didn't understand it

***Romans 10:19-20 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."<sup>20</sup> 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."***

Paul's answer to this is amazing: look at what has happened to the Gentiles!

Paul is quoting the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy in which God says he will make Israel envious by Gentile nations... but specifically, a nation that has NO UNDERSTANDING!

Here was a people completely without any spiritual understanding, and God overcame that and saved many of them

*Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

No excuse for Israel! God is able to overcome anyone's lack of understanding.

### **Excuse #3: God didn't reveal himself to us because we didn't seek him**

*Romans 10:20 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."*

Paul already told us that NO ONE SEEKS GOD... including the Jews. The Gentiles certainly were not seeking God, yet God saved them anyway. Here we see the astonishing grace and love of God... the human race universally turned away from God... God was the ultimate jilted lover, the ultimate rejected, unrequited suitor, both toward Jews and Gentiles alike. We chose money and sex and power and pleasure and a thousand worldly idols rather than God, and yet He ordained our salvation

"I was found by those who did not seek me" = God finally creates a yearning inside their hearts in the end... they DID seek God and He was found by them; but originally no one seeks Him

God uncovered His glory to a people who were initially NOT INTERESTED... Gentiles couldn't have cared less, but then they were stunned by grace.

### **Excuse #4: God has given up on us**

*Romans 10:21 But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."*