



## Lesson 16

### The Word of Faith

#### Romans 10

**“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ - that is, the **word of faith** which we are preaching.”**

**Romans 10.8**

It is important to remember that chapter 10 falls in a section where Paul is lamenting the fact that his Jewish kinsmen had mostly rejected the gospel. This is the topic of Romans 9, 10 & 11 (remember, Paul didn't write the letter in chapters). It's little surprise that Paul spends so much time on the lost condition of his kinsmen, since some were accusing Paul of being anti-Jew (see Acts 21.21). Paul's proclamation of the gospel fueled this misunderstanding since the gospel declared that justification could come only through faith in Christ and not through the Law, circumcision and physical descent from Abraham. Paul was not antagonistic to the Jews, he sorrowed over their rejection of Christ (9.1-3), but the fact that they pursued a righteousness of works rather than the righteousness of faith meant that they had stumbled (9.30-33).

As always, the broader context is essential to understanding the points made in individual verses and passages. Chapter 9 deals at length with God's election, but it does not teach the individual / personal election professed by Calvin and others. Rather, just as Israel had been elected to serve God and bring about the Christ, now the elect are those who pursue the righteousness of faith. Context is key. Chapter 10 is best known for what Paul says about how one can be saved in vss. 9-11. Was Paul saying that sins are forgiven as soon as one believes something in his heart and professes Christ's name? Many say that's what these verses teach, but when the context is taken into account we will see that it's not so simple.

### **How Israel Went Wrong (Vss. 1-4)**

Romans 10:1-4 (NASB95)

- 1Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.
- 2For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.
- 3For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.
- 4For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

1. The opening verse of chapter 10 echoes the opening of chapter 9. There, Paul expressed his sorrow over Israel's lost condition, now he says, "my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."
2. But, why was Israel lost? It wasn't for a lack of zeal (vs. 2). That had zeal in abundance, but their zeal lacked knowledge... knowledge of Christ. As we will see, this knowledge was available, but it had not been accepted. Paul can sympathize with their plight as his earlier life could also be summed up as being zealous for God without knowledge (cf. Gal. 1.14; Phil. 3.4-6).

3. Vss. 3-4 echo some of Paul's points from chapter 9. Israel was a blessed nation, but its greatest blessing was how God used them to bring about the Christ (9.4-5). Christ "is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," (10.4), but the Jews had failed to see this. They continued pursuing the righteousness of the Law. For them, the Law was the end of righteousness, not the means to the end: Christ (see Galatians 3.23-24). This is how they stumbled over Christ (9.32-33).

## The Righteousness of Faith (Vss. 5-13)

Romans 10:5-13 (NASB95)

5For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

6But 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),

7or "WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

8But 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,

9that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

10for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

11For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

12For 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;

13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

- 1. Righteousness cannot be based on the Law (vs. 5).** Paul references Moses' statement in Lev. 18.5 that "a man may live if he does them." Paul has already stated that "it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified," (2.13). The problem was that no one kept the Law! (see 3.9-23).
- 2. Righteousness is based on faith... faith in Christ! (vss. 6-8).** In this section Paul makes use of a quote from Deut. 30.11-14. The point of the original quotation was that Israel had what they needed to be righteous. The Law was not hidden from them, it was theirs. They just needed to do it. It's appropriate that Paul uses the quotation in reference to Christ, because true righteousness could only come through Him. They did not have to ascend to heaven to bring Christ down (He had already come!). They did not have to descend into the abyss to bring Christ up (He had already been raised!). No, the word of faith was near to them! They just needed to believe in Him...
- 3. If they would believe in Christ and confess Him, they would be saved (vss. 9-13).** Now

we arrive at a passage that generates much controversy and discussion. Is salvation simply a matter of believing in the heart and uttering a confession? Again, consider the context. Paul has been lamenting the lost condition of his Jewish kinsmen. They were lost because they rejected Christ, namely Christ as their Lord. They could be saved if they would believe in their hearts that Jesus was raised from the dead by God (proof of His Lordship, see Acts 2.32-36) and confess His Lordship with their mouths. The Jews weren't stumbling over baptism, they were stumbling over the Lordship of Jesus (see 9.33)! Put it another way, if they would acknowledge and submit to His Lordship, baptism wouldn't be an issue... they would be baptized once they understood it was something that their Lord required of them. Paul has already made the case for baptism in 6.1-11, to say that he now rejects baptism is ludicrous.

## Why Israel Had Not Believed (Vss. 14-21)

Romans 10:14–21 (NASB95)

14How 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?

15How 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!"

16However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"

17So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

18But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD."

19But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU."

20And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME."

21But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."

- 1. They needed the word proclaimed to them (vss. 14-15).** To have faith in Christ, one must hear of Christ. To hear of Christ, Christ must be preached. The message of Christ has been entrusted to men, i.e. preachers. (Not an official title, but anyone who would herald the message of Christ). Paul's statement regarding their beautiful feet (quoting Isaiah 52.7) is interesting when the dangerous and difficult roads of his day are considered. Many went through great peril to proclaim the gospel (consider Paul's persecutions in 2Cor. 11).
- 2. They needed to heed the word (vss. 16-17).** Faith does come by hearing, but for faith to be produced, the message must be heeded. The preacher can proclaim the message, but he cannot make the audience heed it!
- 3. Israel had no excuse (vss. 18-21).** They had heard the message, but they would not heed it.

They could not blame anyone but themselves for their rejection. God was not responsible for their rejection, even though He knew it would occur as was revealed in the prophets (cf. Isaiah 65.1-2). The Jews' rejection and the Gentiles' acceptance is considered further in chapter 11.

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## **A Note About The "5 Steps Of Salvation"**

1. "How can one be saved?" "He needs to hear, believe, repent, confess & be baptized!" We refer to this as the 5 Steps of Salvation. They aren't called that in Scripture, but we've adopted that name since each is required for salvation in the NT.
2. It's not unBiblical to talk about the 5 Steps, but I don't believe it's the most Biblical way to talk about it. A weakness I see in the 5 Steps approach is the arguments that arise over passages such as Romans 10.9-10 and Ephesians 2.8-9. Those passages don't mention repentance or baptism as necessary to salvation, so if the 5 Steps is what God said we must do to be saved, why aren't all 5 found in every passage?
3. This is why I think it better to describe how one is saved in this way:
  - Someone hears the Word (the message about Jesus and about His commands).
  - They put their trust in Him (faith)
  - Once they put their absolute trust in Him, they will do whatever He says they should do (including confessing His name, repenting of sins and being baptized to have those sins forgiven.)
4. This approach emphasizes faith (because the NT emphasizes faith) while showing that everything God says we should do is part of our salvation.