

IN OVER OUR HEADS

"LIVING SENT"

ROMANS 9:30-10:21

Why don't people believe the gospel? Why don't they receive the forgiveness of sins and the right standing before God that Jesus offers them by his grace through faith? Perhaps they don't believe the gospel for similar reasons that the Jews in Paul's day didn't. Many of the less zealous ones simply didn't see the need. They believed Gentiles needed salvation but certainly not Jews. They believed their Jewish identity and heritage marked by circumcision was enough. "We have Abraham as our father," they would say. To them John the Baptist said, "I tell you the truth that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham" (Mt 3:9). They didn't understand; physical descent from Abraham wasn't enough. Paul put it this way, "A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical" (Ro 2:28). Like them, many irreligious but "spiritual" people nowadays, not to mention today's secular agnostics, likewise assume they don't need to be saved. Love is all that matters. The more zealous Jews, like Paul, tried to obtain righteousness by keeping the law. Zeal is a good thing but only if tied to truth. Unfortunately, theirs was not, since righteousness cannot be obtained by the works of the law. To them Paul says: "No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin" (Ro 3:30). And about them he writes: "Their zeal is not based on knowledge. 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" (10:2-3). Sad to say, many people, religious and irreligious, are making the same mistake today. As one pastor remarks, "They think that their good works and religious deeds will save them, when actually these practices are keeping them from being saved. Certainly, many of them are sincere and devout, but sincerity and devotion will never save the soul" (Warren W. Wiersbe, "Romans," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:547). Their assumption reminds me of the one behind the joke about two men running from a bear. The one says to the other, "I don't have to be fast enough to outrun the bear; I just have to outrun you!" Some people assume if they are as good as or better than the other guy, they'll be OK.

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

John's Gospel records that Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (14:6). In other words, no one gains access to the Father without coming to him through Jesus Christ. No one is forgiven, no one is made righteous, no one forms a personal relationship with the Father apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Just moments before Jesus uttered these words, he told the disciples that he was going to go the Father's house to prepare a place for them and would one day return to take them there. Then he went on to say, "You know the way to the place where I am going." When Thomas confessed that

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*Everyone who calls on the name
of the Lord will be saved.*

– Romans 10:13

When Thomas confessed that he neither understood exactly where Jesus was going nor how to get there, Jesus made the directions perfectly clear: I am the way to get there; I am the way to the Father's house. What Jesus said to the disciples reiterates, albeit in slightly different words, the point of John 1:12, that to all who receive Jesus, to those who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God. Jesus isn't a way to God; he is the way to God.

Many people today find this hard to swallow. As far as they're concerned, Christians who claim that the only path that leads to God goes through Jesus of Nazareth are arrogant, narrow-minded, and bigoted. In a day of religious pluralism and tolerance, Christianity's exclusivity is politically incorrect, a verbal slap in the face of other faiths. Lee Strobel writes, "When I was an atheist, I bristled at assertions by Christians that they held a monopoly on the only correct approach to religion. 'Who do they think they are?' I'd grouse. 'Who are they to judge everyone else? Where's the love of Jesus in that?'" (*The Case for Faith*, 146).

Nevertheless, Paul is on the same page as John. He writes: "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Ro 10:9-13).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 9:30-10:21

30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. 32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. 33 As it is written:

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."

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

5 Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." 6 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) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with

your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

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

16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. 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.

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."

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.

21 But concerning Israel he says,

"All day long I have held out my hands
to a disobedient and obstinate people."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline the questions in 9:30, 32.
- * Circle "pursue" in 9:30, 31.
- * Circle "righteousness" in 9:30, 31; 10:3, 4, 5, 6.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in 9:31, 32; 10:2, 6, 8, 16, 18, 21.
- * Circle "stone" and "rock" in 9:33.
- * Bracket "righteousness of God" in 10:3.
- * Circle "culmination" in v. 4.
- * Circle "declare" in v. 9.
- * Double underline "Jesus is Lord" in v. 9.
- * Bracket "put to shame" in v. 11.
- * Circle "call" in v. 12.
- * Circle "they" in vv. 14, 15.
- * Bracket "beautiful are the feet" in v. 15.

day **2** EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Explain the *irony* in the contrast found in 9:30-31.
2. The Jews pursued righteousness. Explain why they *didn't* obtain it.
3. According to Paul, the combined quotation of Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 (v. 33) applies to Jesus. How so?
4. "Christ is the *culmination* of the law" (10:4). What does he mean by that?
5. What is the point of the two *rhetorical* questions in verse 7?
6. Does declaring "Jesus is Lord" (v. 9) mean making Jesus the Lord of one's *personal* life? Explain.
7. Paraphrase verse 13 so that an eight-year-old child can understand it.
8. Verses 14, 15 describe a chain of logic with five links that end in calling on Jesus. List the five links.
9. Israel cannot excuse its failure to believe based on ignorance of the gospel message. Why not?
10. Neither can it excuse its failure based on a lack of understanding. Why not?

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Paul opens the next section of the book of Romans, 9:30-10:21, by pointing out the *irony* of what happened to Israel. Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained it, while the people of Israel who pursued righteousness did not. Then he explains why. Gentiles obtained it by faith, while Jews who pursued it by law, did not. One commentator explains: "It is proper to seek righteousness, that is, a proper relation with God; and the law itself is a good thing. But to seek righteousness by means of works done in obedience to the law, may produce at most human righteousness, not God's (x. 3) . . . Israel sought the right goal by the wrong means" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, HNTC, 193). Even more ironic is the fact that the "stone," namely Messiah, that God provided as "a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation, the one who relies on it will never be shaken" (Isa 28:18) was a "stone that causes people to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall" (8:14). Running in the pursuit of works righteousness, the people of Israel were tripped up by Christ, whom God provided as the way of obtaining faith righteousness, oblivious to what was written: "the one who believes in him will never be put to shame" (9:33).

Given the apostle's concern for the salvation of his people (10:1-4), he then goes on to clarify *how* righteousness is and is not obtained and *by whom* (vv. 5-13). In verses 1-4 Paul explains that his people were led astray by their misdirected zeal for the law much like he was before he was saved. They were sincere, but their sincerity was not based on knowledge, neither was his. They were so busy trying to keep the law that they missed the fact that "Christ is the end of the law." He accomplished the purpose for which the law was intended and brought an end to its authority. As a result, righteousness is there for everyone who believes. But they did not submit to that righteousness; instead, they kept trying to be righteous for themselves convinced he who obeys the law's commandments will live. People nowadays aren't so zealous to do good. They just assume they're good enough-not perfect, nobody's perfect, just good enough.

In verses 5-13 he argues that the righteousness that is by faith is readily available to all. Christ does

not have to be brought down from heaven or up from the dead to learn about obtaining it. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30 here in support of the fact that "the message about the righteousness of faith, preached by Paul and the other apostles, is, like the law of God, accessible and understandable: 'the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 656). Word of it is found in Paul's gospel. The good news has two facets: 1) agree with other Christians that Jesus is Lord and 2) affirm that God raised him from the dead. Do that *one* thing and you will be saved. The righteousness that is by faith will be yours. The same is true for anyone who trusts in him for no one who trusts in him will ever be put to shame. The same Lord is Lord of all who richly blesses all who call on him for salvation (v. 12). In verse 13, Paul quotes Joel 2:32 to confirm his statement in verse 12, "there is no difference between Jew and Gentile." Both are now treated alike. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord," that is, everyone who believes rather than keeps the law, a point missed by the Jews (vv. 1-4), "will be saved." Calling "on the name of the Lord" amounts to no more than "calling on the Lord," and in this context "the Lord" clearly refers to "the Lord Jesus Christ." This is implied by verse 17 where Paul says, "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." No one who trusts in him will ever be disappointed (v. 11).

In verses 14-17, using a series of four rhetorical questions, the apostle continues to explore four prerequisites to calling on the name of the Lord: believing, hearing, preaching, and sending. Each of the questions begins, "How can they?" and the implied answer to each one is "They can't." Paul's logic hardly needs explaining. Nevertheless, it goes like this. People cannot call on Jesus Christ without believing that he is able to save them. And they cannot believe that he is able to save them without first hearing about him. And they cannot hear about him without someone preaching to them. And someone cannot preach to them without being sent. Being "sent" in this context implies that Christ's heralds do not come in their own authority with their own message, but in the authority of the one who sent them with the message he entrusted to

them. "Consequently," Paul says in verse 17, "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." It is this gospel message concerning Christ spoken by him through his heralds that produces faith. Tragically, "not all the Israelites accepted the good news" (v. 16).

Finally, in verses 18-21, using several quotations

from the Old Testament, Paul concludes that Israel is without excuse. They did hear the gospel (v. 18). Like the witness of natural revelation, the preaching of the gospel spread worldwide. They did understand what they heard (v. 19). After all, Gentiles understood the message, so must have the Jews. Disobedience and obstinance, not lack of opportunity, explain the nation's unbelief.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Israel failed in its pursuit of righteousness because it did not submit to the righteousness of God by faith, refusing to call on the name of the Lord Jesus, even though it had heard and understood the message of the gospel.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Reflect on what people today have in common with the people of Israel in Paul's day as far as righteousness is concerned.

What do you think of telling people they must make Jesus the Lord of their lives to be saved?

Look at your feet. Describe how "beautiful" they are.

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

9:30 **pursue** "The figure of a foot race is introduced, as indicated by 'pursue' and 'obtained.' The paradox is sharp, picturing Gentiles who are unconcerned about acquiring righteousness actually getting the prize, even though not competing in the race with the Jews" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:109).

v. 33 **stone, rock** Isa. 8:14; 28:16 are combined here (cf., 1Pe 2:6-8). The message about Jesus, the Messiah, "has the double effect of creating both offense and faith" (Barrett, 194).

10:2 **knowledge** "Paradoxically, it is Israel's zeal for God that constitutes their greatest barrier (v. 2). The apostle knows whereof he speaks, for his zeal on behalf of Judaism had been notorious (Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14). That very zeal so preoccupied him that he felt bound to consider Jesus and his followers as traitors to the faith of his fathers. But he persecuted in ignorance (1 Tim 1:13). So here he diagnoses the zeal of Israel as lacking in 'knowledge'" (Harrison, 110).

v. 4 **culmination** "The analogy of a race course (which many scholars think *telos* is meant to convey) is helpful: the finish line is both the 'termination' of the race (the race is over when it is reached) and the 'goal' of the race (the race is run for the sake of reaching the finish line). Likewise, we suggest, Paul is implying that Christ is the 'end' of the law (he brings its era to a close) and its 'goal' (he is what the law anticipated and pointed toward)" (641).

vv. 6-8 **Who will . . .** "As God brought his word near to Israel so they might know and obey him, so God now brings his word 'near' to both Jews and Gentiles that they might know him through his Son Jesus Christ and respond in faith and obedience . . . The grace of God that underlines the Mosaic covenant is operative now in the New Covenant; and, just as Israel could not plead the excuse that she did not know God's will, so now, Paul says, neither Jew nor Gentile can plead ignorance of God's revelation in Jesus Christ" (Moo, 653).

v. 9 **declare, believe** "Both the presence of these two conditions and the order in which they occur are due to Paul's desire to show how his 'word of faith' precisely matches the description of the word in Deut. 30:14, as being 'in your mouth' and 'in your heart.' Paul's rhetorical purpose at this point should make us cautious about finding great significance in the reference to confession here, as if Paul were making oral confession a second requirement for salvation. Belief in the heart is clearly the crucial requirement, as Paul makes clear even in this context (9:30; 10:4, 11). Confession is the outward manifestation of this critical inner response" (657).

v. 9 **Jesus is Lord** "Paul's statement in vv. 9, 10 is misunderstood when it is made to support the claim that one cannot be saved unless he makes Jesus the Lord of his life by a personal commitment. Such a commitment is most important; however, in this passage, Paul is speaking of the objective lordship of Christ, which is the very cornerstone for faith, something without which no one could be saved" (Harrison, 10:112).

v. 12 **call** "'Call upon' with a personal object is used in secular Greek for asking someone for assistance, and especially of asking God, or the gods, for help or intervention. But 'calling on the Lord' is also quite common in the LXX [the Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint] and Jewish literature, and was taken over by the early Christians with reference both to God the Father and to Christ" (Moo, 660).

v. 14 **then** "In verse 13 Paul has affirmed that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. For Paul the Lord is Jesus Christ, and it is clear to him that the Jewish nation as a whole has not called upon the name of the Lord. Throughout the remainder of this chapter Paul deals with the question as to why it is that the Jews have not called upon the Lord. He does this by constructing a logical chain with five links in order to see where the failure lies" (Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 203).

vv. 14, 15 **how can** "Most of the links in this chain are self-evident and require no comment . . . Men call on the Lord because they believe; they believe because they hear; they hear because others preach; these preach because they are sent—by the Lord, with whom the whole process begins, as it ends with him" (Barrett, 204).

vv. 14, 15 **they** I.e., Israel. "Israel cannot plead ignorance: God has made his purposes clear in both the OT (note the six OT quotations in vv. 14-21) and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. So the fault rests with Israel: she has been 'disobedient and obstinate' (v. 21; cf. v. 16)" (Moo, 662, 63).

v. 15 **beautiful feet** A quote from Isaiah 52:7; cf., Nahum 1:15. "The feet of those who bring good news" is simply a figurative way of referring to "the coming of those who bring good news" (Newman and Nida, 204).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

We live in a success-driven culture. Even when our kids are babies we begin comparing them and pushing them to succeed. When my daughter made a complete sentence at 11 months old I was convinced she was probably the smartest baby in town. Just maybe it was because we had been so intentional about reading to her every day. All of this striving and comparison leaks into our spiritual training as well. Sometimes we unintentionally communicate to our kids that they must perform to earn God's favor. That's what the Jews thought, too. They were convinced they were accepted by God because they adhered to the law. In our text this week, Paul again reminds his readers that righteousness only comes by faith in Jesus. When we confess Jesus as Lord we are acknowledging that only He can save. Only He is the boss. We live under grace, not works. Because of this, it is ok to mess up. When kids (or parents) miss the mark, grace wins. Love, not perfection, is the bull's-eye. We all want our kids to be successful, well-rounded and end up as healthy competent adults. However, let's remind them that we do not let the world inform those definitions. Our faith does. Is Jesus the Boss of your life? Are you quick to humbly repent? Do you love Him first and others next? These are the marks of those who have called upon the Lord and are saved.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Ro 9:30-10:21

1. Why did Israel not attain righteousness?
2. Who is the "stumbling stone" in verses 32 and 33?
3. What does Paul want for the Israelites?

What Do You Think

The Israelites were trying to earn salvation by obeying the Jewish Law. In what ways do people try to earn their salvation today?

What R U Going To Do

Trace your family's feet onto pieces of paper and cut them out. Write Romans 10:15 on a piece of paper and post it near the door. Hang the footprints around it to remind you to take the good news wherever you go!

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 2:10 - *These are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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