

## Israel's Religious Zeal Without Knowledge - Part 3

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 10:11-21

**Preached on:** Sunday, June 10, 2012

Romans chapter 10 verses 11 through 21. This is the third in a series on Israel's religious zeal without knowledge that the apostle Paul has been speaking about. Let me read this text to you as we pray that the Spirit of God will make it clear and apply it to our hearts.

Romans chapter 10 beginning in verse 11.

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

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!" However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But 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." But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU." And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO SOUGHT ME NOT, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME." But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."<sup>1</sup>

Galileo was a 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian physicist, mathematician and astronomer and even a philosopher who has been called the father of modern observational astronomy and he discovered that the earth revolved around the sun, contrary to the position of the Roman Catholic Church in that day that was insistent that the sun revolved around the earth. After all, Psalm 104 verse five says:

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 10:11-21.

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“He established the earth upon its foundations, So that it will not totter forever and ever.”<sup>2</sup>

And in Ecclesiastes 1:5 we read:

“Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there again.”<sup>3</sup>

Well, despite empirical evidence in Galileo’s favor and even asking his accusers to look for themselves through his telescope the Roman Catholic inquisition refused. They already knew what they believed. They would only believe what they wanted to believe so eventually he was convicted of heresy. He was forced to recant and he spent the rest of his life under house arrest.

In much the same way the Jews in the first century and many today believe only what they want to believe, a pit frankly that we all are prone to fall in from time to time.

Thus far in Romans 10 Paul has revealed his deep sorrow for his kinsmen because of their stubborn disbelief. They had zeal, but without knowledge. Their low view of the holiness of God fueled a high view of their own righteousness and, again, we all tend to think much more highly of ourselves than we ought. And as we have learned thus far, Israel absolutely resented the idea of Christ’s gift of grace. They resented Jesus. They resented everything that he stood for. In their thinking, who needs grace when you can obey the law? They also rejected the idea of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. So if righteous people don’t need the righteousness of Christ. After all, they are convinced that their works are sufficient. Who needs faith in Christ as their only hope of salvation when you can have faith in yourself.

So this grieved Paul. So here in Romans 10 Paul exposes this damning error and he continues to preach the good news that Christ came to earth and suffered the agonies of hell for all who will believe in him. He perfectly satisfied the law in our stead. He accomplished that which we could never do so that Israel would not receive the lowly suffering Messiah. Although many of the ancient rabbis embraced the Old Testament concept of a suffering Messiah, but most of them rejected it along with Israel as a whole.

And now in verses 11 through 21 he is going to expand upon this theme of Israel’s zeal without knowledge by exposing their failure to be the witness nation that God intended them to be. And he is going to do this by exposing two things. Number one, their refusal to believe in God’s universal call of salvation. We are going to see that they thought that salvation was only for the Jews. It didn’t include the Gentiles, but that, in fact, God had revealed all along, even in the Old Testament Scriptures that the Gentiles were also those

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 104:5.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesiastes 1:5.

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that could be recipients of his saving grace. But, again, they chose to believe what they wanted to believe.

Secondly, he is going to expose their ignorance of prophetic Scripture concerning their willful rejection. And, as always, Paul's arguments really elicit some very practical considerations for each of us today as we will see.

So, first of all, let's examine this issue that Paul addresses concerning Israel's refusal to believe in God's universal call of salvation.

In order to understand this, I must give you some historical context. You must realize that the Jews hated Gentiles worse than a bird hates every scale of the snake. Now, hatred and prejudice are deep seated within the human nature. It is part of our sinfulness. 1 John 2:16 we are reminded that we all struggle with the boastful pride of life, which is an ongoing condition that we must battle, this idea that says, "I am special. I am superior." And we become self centered and self absorbed. We think we are always right. Everything has got to be my way or the highway. I am superior to others and so on.

By the way, if you don't see this in you life, it is because you pride is so excessive, it has blinded you.

Well, this feeds all kinds of prejudices. We tend to dislike those that are different than us. We automatically assume we are better. And prejudice is even common in the Church today. We see it all the time in Christian circles. Things have to be my way, my style, my taste, my Bible translation. Mine is right. Yours is wrong. We even see some of this narrow minded provincialism here in Calvary Bible Church. As the church continues to grow so, too, will many cultural variations as people come from different parts of the country. Folks tend to get uncomfortable. Divisions begin to occur. It is all a part of who we are that we must battle.

If you don't think so, just imagine if a visitor came to your house and you sat down to eat and rather than using the fork they used their fingers. Millions of people around the world eat with their fingers. And your response would automatically be gross, how barbaric, how disgusting. Why don't they use a fork? And their answer would be: Listen, before I ate, I cleaned my fingers and my fingers have never been in another person's mouth, unlike your fork. Very different perspectives, but we automatically assume we are right and other people are wrong.

So there exists within every human being a proclivity to pride and prejudice. But, dear friends, the Jews took this to a whole new level. Because they were God's chosen covenant people, the apple of his eye, they were absolutely certain that God would shower his love on them and them alone, no other people. But you must understand that they have suffered unimaginable horrors at the hands of the Gentiles. Think of the

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Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Philistines, those from Tyre and Sidon and Philistia, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans. This is why Jonah boarded a ship that headed in the opposite direction when God called him to go preach to the 600,000 inhabitants of Nineveh. Nineveh was the exceedingly wicked, idolatrous, barbaric and yet magnificent capital city of Assyria. They say it took about three days to walk around it.

Let me give you a little background to help you understand the mindset of the Jews even in the first century as we go back to Jonah's day. The Assyrians were notoriously brutal. Nahum described Nineveh in Nahum 3:1 as the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage, her prey never departs.

If you look at history and you look at some of the reliefs that have been carved that describe what happened historically with the Assyrians came in with Sennacherib into Israel, you will see that they would do things that are unimaginable. They would impale people alive on sharp poles and stand them up. They would skin them alive. They would behead them. They would pile up their heads in large piles. They would cut off people's hands and feet and ears and noses. They would gouge out their eyes. In fact, some of this still occurs today in that region, the region of Iraq in particular. Their atrocities were legendary. And you must understand for Jonah this would have included some of his family members. He would have seen some of this. But God desiring to demonstrate his mercy and his compassion, even upon the most wicked of all people called, commissioned Jonah to go and to warn them of his judgment and to call them to repentance. And you can understand why Jonah didn't want to go at some level. Actually it wasn't because he was afraid or because he feared that somehow they would reject God's offer to forgive them, but rather he did not want God to save them.

But after an interesting swim and a fishing expedition that you all are aware of, you will recall that Jonah did go and warn the people of Nineveh of God's judgment unless they repent. And in Jonah 3:5 we read:

“Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.”<sup>4</sup>

And in verse eight we read the king ordered them to call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.

But then we read in Jonah chapter four verse one:

But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was

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<sup>4</sup> Jonah 3:5.

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still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."<sup>5</sup>

It is amazing, isn't it? Although Jonah had been the recipient of divine pardon, he hated the Gentiles so much that he would not want them to experience that same pardon. This was a great object lesson that God gave to the Jews revealing, again, that his mercy extended beyond just his covenant people Israel. It included the Gentiles as well. Yet still in the first century and frankly in the heart of many Jews today in modern Israel there remains a seething hatred for Gentiles.

In Jesus' day every morning a Jewish man would rise and pay, "I thank God that I am not a woman, a slave or a Gentile." Any Jew that would travel in other lands and then enter back into Israel from that land would immediately take off their robes and begin to shake the dust. They would take the dust off of their feet to somehow demonstrate their utter disdain for the countries that they had just parted from and for the people that lived there. They would never even enter into the household of a Gentile, never eat with them, never even touch one lest they be defiled. And yet Jesus violated all of this.

Now the Jews despised the message of the gospel of grace, but the idea that God's mercy and his grace would extend beyond them to the Gentiles, that was just over the top. That was absolutely abhorrent to them.

Now it is for this reason that in this section of Scripture Paul begins with an assertion that the extent of divine generosity in the offer of saving grace extends beyond just the Jews and includes the Gentiles. Notice verse 11.

"For the Scripture says, 'WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.'"<sup>6</sup>

Quoting Isaiah 28 verse 16. This, of course, was consistent with Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28 and verse 19 that we are to make disciples of all the nations. He said in Acts 1:8 that by the power of the Holy Spirit:

"...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jonah 4:1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 10:11.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:8.

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So now by quoting the prophet Isaiah Paul reminds them of the universal scope of God's message of saving grace by faith. This was a truth the Jews should have known, but chose instead to believe what they wanted to believe, not the truth. They forgot their calling as a witness nation.

In Exodus 19:6 God says:

“...and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”<sup>8</sup>

You see, they were set apart by God to represent him to all the peoples of the earth. And next Paul offers three statements to support his assertion concerning the universal scope of grace for all who would believe. And I might add that each of the following statements supports the one that precedes it. Notice verse 12.

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.”<sup>9</sup>

This points back to verse 11 that no one who puts his trust in Christ will ever be disappointed, including the Gentiles. And Paul has already stated this same truth. You will recall in Romans three verse 21 he says:

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction.<sup>10</sup>

Now, to support his assertion even further, notice the next statement in verse 12.

“For... the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.”<sup>11</sup>

What a magnificent truth this is. Think about that. Lord Jesus is Lord of all. Whether Jew, whether Gentile and I might also add whether they bow the knee or not. Those who don't bow the knee now will eventually confess Jesus as Lord. When they will confess him now or at that time as their judge that is pronouncing sentence upon them. But he also adds that he is abounding in riches for all who call upon him. So he gives generously of his wealth to all who call upon him. And his wealth is beyond calculation.

We have to pause here for a moment and just meditate on this. The prophet Haggai says

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<sup>8</sup> Exodus 19:6.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 10:12.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 3:21-22.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 10:12.

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in chapter two verse eight that all the gold and all the silver belongs to him. And Psalm 50 beginning at verse 10 we read:

For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine.<sup>12</sup>

It reminds me of a chorus that I used to sing when I was a little boy.

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the wealth in every mine.  
He owns the rivers and the rocks and rills, the sun and stars that shine.  
Wonderful riches more than tongue can tell, he is my Father so they are mine as well.  
He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. I know that he will care for me.

Maybe some of you sang that when you were young.

Beloved, remember this when you pray, when you worship the Lord, when you sing. I love Paul's testimony in Ephesians 3:8. He says:

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."<sup>13</sup>

And for all of us who know and love Christ, the riches of Christ had been lavished upon all who trust in him. We have the righteousness of Christ. We will inherit the kingdom of God, because we are his sons and daughters. We have obtained, according to 1 Peter 1:4:

"...an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."<sup>14</sup>

Later Peter says:

"In this you greatly rejoice."<sup>15</sup>

We are the children of God, Romans eight verse 16 and 17 tells us that we are heirs of God. We are fellow heirs with Christ. And John speaks of our Savior in Revelation five verse 12 saying:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Psalms 50:10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 3:8.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 1:4.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Peter 1:6.

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But Paul is making it clear. The riches of God's grace are not exclusive to the Jew, but available to all men. And he supports his original assertion in verse 11 with yet one final proof of this universal scope of divine generosity, verse 13. He says:

“...for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’”<sup>17</sup>

Quoting Joel two and verse 32. In the Old Testament the phrase, “Call upon the name of the Lord,” really meant to acknowledge Yahweh as the covenant God. Lord is Yahweh, Jehovah God, his covenant name. But the emphasis here is on the idea of whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

In Galatians three verse 28 and nine Paul reminds the saints there of this same truth. There he says:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.<sup>18</sup>

My, you talk about offensive to the Jews. Are you kidding me? If you belong to Christ you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise? That is right. He is saying that everyone who trusts in Christ is an heir of the spiritual blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant. And what is that? Namely, justification by faith. Remember earlier in verse nine he says:

“...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”<sup>19</sup>

Next Paul goes on to ask them a series of rhetorical questions to further expose how Israel's lack of faith in Christ is really a violation of what he has just quoted from the prophet Joel in verse 13. In other words, he is saying to them, in essence, “You, Israel, have not called upon the name of the Lord. You have not done this because you have not called upon Christ. And for this reason you have not been saved.”

So notice verse 14. He says:

“How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Revelation 5:12.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 10:13.

<sup>18</sup> Galatians 3:28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Romans 10:9.

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There is the indictment.

“And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?”<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps an indictment upon the rabbis who rejected Jesus as Messiah and taught the people the same.

“And how shall they hear without a preacher?”<sup>22</sup>

Literally, someone preaching, someone making a proclamation. This is not limited just to a pastor or a preacher or an evangelist. It includes all believers. Paul is saying, “This is what God has commissioned me to do as an apostle, to proclaim the good news of the gospel so that you will believe and be saved, so that you will call upon the name of the Lord.”

Verse 15. He says:

“And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”<sup>23</sup>

Here is a defense of his apostleship, that God has sent him to preach to them.

Now what follows is very fascinating. He expands upon this by using an Old Testament proclamation of good news. When Isaiah described the messengers who brought the news of Israel’s immanent release from Babylonian captivity, notice in verse 15 he says:

“Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!’”<sup>24</sup>

Quoting Isaiah 52:7. Imagine if we had been conquered by China and we are all now living over in China. And somebody comes and says, “Guess what? We are being released. God is blessing us. We are getting to return home.” Imagine what good news that would have been. That is the comparison here. The exiles of that day were overjoyed by this news. Not only did it mean that they could return to their homeland, but it meant that God was once again going to show his favor upon them. They were so electrified with exuberance over the good news of their deliverance that even the filthy feet of the messengers were considered beautiful.

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 10:14.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 10:15.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

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It is interesting in that text that Paul quotes in Isaiah 52 verse seven, just three verses later in that same text in verse 10 the prophet used the good news of deliverance in that day to point to a greater proclamation of deliverance in a future day, one that would be extended to all men not just to Israel. There we read in Isaiah 52:10

“The LORD has bared His holy arm.”<sup>25</sup>

The idea of he rolled up his sleeves and he got to work here as the deliverer.

“The LORD has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations, That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God.”<sup>26</sup>

And this speaks of a universal salvation for all who will call upon him as promised in the parallel passage in Isaiah 51:4-6 where we read how he will one day judge the nations and he will in the end of verse six have a salvation that will be forever. He says, “My righteousness will not wane.”

So, indeed, God not only delivered his chosen people once again from their oppressors to demonstrate his saving power and this is what Paul is speaking of here in verse 15 with regard to the good news, but also beyond that to preserve his covenant people, to preserve them so that ultimately the promises of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled, that ultimately the Messiah would come and purchase the redemption of all who will call upon him.

John describes this in Revelation five and verse nine when we as glorified saints will one day sing, quote:

“...a new song, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.’”<sup>27</sup>

So Paul here speaks here in verse 15 of this parallel of the good news in that day with the good news of the gospel.

Now it is important for me to note. Though God’s election is not based on human merit, but solely upon his uninfluenced choice, here we are reminded that the elect are not saved apart from believing the message preached by those who were sent. Furthermore, I would add that when a man rejects the faithful proclamation of a preacher, he is rejecting God himself who sent him.

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<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 52:10.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Revelation 5:9.

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You know, as a pastor, as a preacher of the gospel, I am nothing. I am no different than you other than my calling and maybe my gifting. But the message I preach is of infinite value, because it is God's message. I am like the old clay pot Paul speaks about. I am lowly. I am expendable. I am common. But I hold within me a treasure that is the greatest treasure in the universe. That is what Paul described in 2 Corinthians 4:7.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.”<sup>28</sup>

So you don't look at the messenger. You look at the message. And one other important note that I believe flows from this passage of Scripture. While all believers are saved to serve and the paramount act of service is to proclaim the saving power of Christ, those who call themselves pastors must make sure that, indeed, they have been called by God and sent by God. Many churches today, I fear, are pastored by unqualified men and women whom God has not appointed. In many cases they are self appointed. I have seen with my own eyes young men who in a service get a quiver in their liver and suddenly they feel like they have been called to preach. They go forward and announce that and I have literally seen in one case where two men preached their first sermon in the evening service without any fruit as evidence of the giftedness, without any history of being a shepherd, with no training. They are not only allowed to stand behind the sacred desk, to say thus saith the Lord, but they are encouraged to do so. And in many places, especially in our southern culture sometimes they will say... the preacher will get up like an old rooster and he will scratch out a spot and pitch a fit and they call that preaching.

Others are more sophisticated and they preach a cotton candy sermonette for Christian ed that bears little resemblance to the truth and unfortunately they will ban their congregation to an island of spiritual infancy. Many today are nothing more than entrepreneurs. Many are unwitting false teachers. They don't realize that much of what they teach is wrong. And others are consciously wolves in sheep's clothing. But what is really fascinating is that most of them have vast crowds that will follow them. And, as I hope you know, there is a huge difference between a crowd and a church.

“HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!”<sup>29</sup>

Referring to the gospel and all of its power and all of its purity. But Paul reminds them of another passage in Isaiah 53 verse one that we read earlier in our service today where the prophet speaks of the suffering Savior that would come and be misunderstood and rejected. They rejected the idea of salvation by faith. Notice verse 16.

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<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:7.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 10:15.

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“However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’”<sup>30</sup>

Once again here we see that a sinner must heed. Literally he must obey. He must be submissive to the gospel message in order to be saved. That includes the truth about the suffering Savior. This is something that was repulsive to the Jews. We are not looking for that kind of a Messiah. They did not believe the Messiah came with this lowly background and this personal appearance wasn't attractive to them. They just could not believe in him. They could not believe in a Messiah that did not match up to their ideas and could not believe in the one that was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, like one from whom men hide their face, the one who was despised and rejected. Men must heed the report of this man, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what Paul was saying here. The Jews didn't do that. A sinner must respond in faith and obedience. Literally he is saying here as well that to be saved means that you must submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Luke describes this in Acts chapter six verse seven. He says:

“And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”<sup>31</sup>

So the report of Isaiah that Paul refers to and the glad tidings here is that of the gospel. Sometimes I will hear people say, “Well, you know, the gospel isn't found in the Old Testament.”

Baloney. It is found right here. It is found all through the Old Testament. So Paul is arguing that God has offered salvation to all men, not just to Jews, but Israelites in particular had not called upon the name of the Lord. They had not believed in Christ.

John Stott observes that, quote, “The essence of Paul's argument is seen if we put his six verbs in the opposite order.” I find this interesting. Here is what he says. “Christ sends heralds. Heralds preach. People hear. Hearers believe. Believers call. And those who call are saved.” That is how it works.

But the Jews as a whole had not done this because of their pride, because of their prejudice, because they believed what they wanted to believe rather than to believe the truth. How typical this is of sinful man. God has revealed the truth of who he is in his creation. He has revealed it to us in our conscience through the law to the prophets,

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 10:16.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 6:7.

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through the apostles, through his written Word, through his Son the Lord Jesus. In fact, in John 1:14 we read that the Word, referring to Jesus, became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. There it is. Yet man suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, doesn't he? Man believes what he wants to believe. Specifically he will believe in a God and in a way of salvation that will accommodate his own sinfulness and allow him to live as he pleases.

Perhaps that describes you. In summarizing all of this he says in verse 17:

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”<sup>32</sup>

It doesn't come through the word of the rabbis unless they are teaching the gospel. It doesn't come, faith doesn't come through the Word of man. It comes through the Word of Christ, literally the word of Messiah, the Lord Jesus that you reject. That is how faith comes, by hearing his Word.

You know, this is very practical for evangelism. Have you ever found yourself saying, “I just don't' really know what to say”?

Duh, as they say in our culture. Let them hear the word of Christ. That is what it says here. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. Point them to what Jesus says. Is that so hard?

That is what will result in faith. That is what the elect will hear. That is what the Holy Spirit will use them to refuse to cause them to respond, to believe, to obey. So you expose their sin. You tell them all of sin, all have fallen short of the glory of God. Every man stands guilty. Every man is condemned. But God in his great mercy has provided a way for sinners to be reconciled to him.

So let me tell you about Jesus. That is what he came to do. He came to give his life as a ransom for all who will trust in him as their only hope of salvation. So you point them to Jesus. I love to point them to the gospel of John. There you will find much about the word of Christ. Unleash the gospel on them, people. And watch what the Holy Spirit will do. He will always do one of two things. He will either harden a hard or he will soften a heart.

This is not complicated. So I hope from this day forward you will never again say, “I just don't really know what to say.” That is not the issue. The issue is your fear. So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

Well, Paul continues with another rhetorical question here in verse 18. He says:

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<sup>32</sup> Romans 10:17.

## Israel's Religious Zeal Without Knowledge - Part 3

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 10:11-21

**Preached on:** Sunday, June 10, 2012

“But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have.”<sup>33</sup>

And here he quotes the Septuagint version of Psalm 19:4. He says:

“THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.”<sup>34</sup>

This is interesting. Paul is here likening the message of the gospel to the voice, to the words of the heavens that declare the glory of God to all of the earth and, thus, awakens faith in sinful men. This is why man is without excuse, right? Romans 1:20. Think about it. From the world’s most powerful microscope which I understand costs 27 million dollars, an electron microscope, they say that it makes images to a resolution of half of the width of a hydrogen atom. I have never seen that, but I am assuming that is really small.

From the world’s most powerful microscope to the world’s most powerful telescope that allows us to look into galaxies that are billions of light years away, man can see the glory of God. He is without excuse.

So when Paul says here:

“But 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.’”<sup>35</sup>

In other words, the voice of God’s natural revelation in creation. You see, the issue is not a lack of truth. That is Paul’s point here. That is not the issue, but the rejection of truth. If I can remind you, beloved, the external evidence of the glory of God can be seen everywhere you look as you behold God’s glory. Again, that is natural revelation that we call it from time to time. But there is also an internal evidence of our sin and of our separation from God. That is found in our conscience according to Romans 2:15:

“...the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Romans 10:18.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Romans 2:15-16.

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But then there is also a combined external and internal evidence of how we are to live for God's glory. And he has revealed that to us through his Word and through the convicting and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. But that is special revelation.

So Paul's argument here is iron clad. He is saying that the gospel is offered and it is available to all men. Verse 18. It has gone out into all the earth, to the ends of the world. Just open up your eyes. Open up your heart.

I might add as a footnote, all of this refutes those who would say, "Well, but surely God does not hold the poor heathen in some distant jungle accountable for his sin because he has never heard the gospel."

No, my friend, please understand. Because of reason and because of conscience all men are without excuse. No man will ever be able to stand before God in the time of judgment and say, "If I had only known that I should have asked you for mercy and place my faith in you to be saved, I would have done so, but nobody told me."

No, God knows the hearts of all men and he will save those that he has chosen before the foundations of the world. And as we read in Acts 13:48 all who have been appointed to eternal life will believe. God will see to that. Yet also man must respond with obedient faith to the internal, the external revelation that God has revealed to him.

God has promised through his prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29 verse 13:

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."<sup>37</sup>

As we study Scripture we see that it is the Spirit of God that initiates that kind of searching, this mysterious work of his regeneration.

You will recall that Jesus said that it is the Holy Spirit that will come to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. It is the Holy Spirit that causes a sinner to be born again, *παλιγγενεσια* (pal-ing-ghen-es-ee'-ah) in the original language, a compound word that means born again. It is sometimes translated regeneration. Regeneration is that instantaneous supernatural impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

In Titus 3:5 we read that:

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Jeremiah 29:13.

<sup>38</sup> Titus 3:5.

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We must remember that it is the Lord Jesus Christ that was the true light which, coming into the world enlightens every man, John 1:9. He is the one that promised that this gospel of his kingdom, according to Matthew 24:14:

“...shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations.”<sup>39</sup>

So God is the one who will be sure to make sure that all sinners who look and see him and realize that somehow they are responsible to him, he will make sure that they will hear the truth and be saved. This is the gospel that is the power of God to everyone who believes.

So Paul moves from exposing Israel’s failure as a witness nation manifested by their refusal to believe in God’s universal call of salvation and secondly and finally he exposes their ignorance of prophetic Scripture concerning their willful rejection.

Now, here we learn that ultimately Israel is responsible for her own ejection. This did not surprise God. Yet it is also interesting that in the mysterious counsels of God’s secret will, in order to ultimately bring glory to himself, God decreed his own displeasure with respect to Israel’s lack of faith. And he predicted this in his prophetic Word, that because of their sin we read that God has temporarily hardened their hearts to the truth as Paul is going to further explain in Romans 11:25.

So Paul now is going to expose their willful ignorance of Scripture that predicted their rejection of Messiah. He is going to do this by referring them to Moses who represented the law and also to Isaiah who represented the prophets. First Moses in verse 19. He says:

“But I say, surely Israel did not know...”<sup>40</sup>

Which you could translate they could not come to understand, did they? Now, of course, the truth was there all along. They just refused to believe it. So he offers them an example by quoting the words of Moses from the law written some 1500 years earlier taken from Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 21.

“But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, ‘I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU.’”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Matthew 24:14.

<sup>40</sup> Romans 10:19.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

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Of course they knew. It was there all along. This is an argument from the greater to the lesser. If the Gentiles, then certainly the Jews. If the wicked, unformed Gentiles could understand the message of the gospel and believe, surely the Jews cannot make a case that they could not understand it. Again, Israel's rejection had... it had nothing to do with the lack of opportunity to hear the truth or somehow their ability to understand it. It had everything to do with their stubborn pride and willful rebellion. And, beloved, were it not for God's grace, we would still be in that state ourselves. People today reject Christ of the same reason. It is not because of a lack of opportunity to hear the truth. My goodness. The truth is everywhere today. Nor are they unable to comprehend it, but it is because of their stubborn pride and willful rebellion.

Paul then bolsters his argument even more by quoting from Isaiah verse 20. He says:

“And Isaiah is very bold and says, ‘I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO SOUGHT ME NOT, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME.’”<sup>42</sup>

Again, another argument from the greater to the lesser. If the Gentiles, then certainly the Jews. Once again the Jews had absolutely no basis to claim, well, we just never heard the truth about the gospel. No, it was all in the Old Testament. You chose to believe what you wanted to believe, because of your sin, because of your pride, because of your prejudice. Nor could they claim, well, we just couldn't understand it.

Now, my friends, please hear this. This implication is so powerful. What he is saying here is that all the time the Jews were trying to earn their salvation through works of the law, they knew that God's requirement for righteousness was available to them only by faith in his saving grace. They knew it all along, but they didn't want to see it. And how often have I seen this even in our Christian circles where the Word of God is so clear, but somehow people have a black sharpie where they cross out things they don't want to hear, things they don't want to read and they don't see it. What an indictment for the Jew.

They had zeal without knowledge. What a sorrow this brought to Paul who lamented over the lost condition of his kinsman according to the flesh. And I might add, what grief this brought to Jesus. You may recall that when he approached Jerusalem for the last time as he was about to offer his life as a ransom for all who would believe in him, he looked upon Jerusalem and according to Luke 19 verse 41 we read:

And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Romans 10:20.

<sup>43</sup> Luke 19:41-42.

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And in Mathew 23 beginning in verse 37 we have another account where Jesus said:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!<sup>44</sup>

That is why Paul concludes this section by saying in verse 21:

“But as for Israel He says, ‘ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE.’”<sup>45</sup>

What about you, my friend? Have you humbled yourself in obedient faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ? I pray that you have. But in many cases—and this may be true of you—we tend to believe we want to believe, because of our stubborn pride, because of our willful rebellion. Now you may be convinced that the sun orbits around the earth, but that does not change the truth that, in fact, the earth orbits around the sun. You may believe that somehow you are good enough for God to accept you into the presence of his holiness. But the truth is you are not. The only way you could ever be reconciled to a holy God is by calling upon the name of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you do that, when you cry out to him for a mercy that you do not deserve, God will be gracious and he will forgive your sins.

This is the glorious message of the gospel. And, friends, those of you who know and love Christ, let's once again celebrate this. You know, we hear about it so much. Sometimes as people say, familiarity can be breed contempt. It can certainly breed apathy. But I hope you will never ever allow the glorious truth of God's saving grace to get lost in all of the business and frankly all of the silliness and the frivolity of life, because there is only one truth that has infinite value, that has eternal significance. That is the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we proclaim it, may we protect it and may we live it that God would be glorified and that we will be blessed.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for your saving grace in all that that means to us. Lord, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We pray for our Jewish friends and many Gentile friends who continue to reject the gospel. Oh, Spirit of God, cause them to submit to the truth that is all around them that they might believe, that they might be saved. We ask this in Jesus' name and for his glory. Amen.*

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<sup>44</sup> Matthew 23:37-38.

<sup>45</sup> Romans 10:21.

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