

# Romans

## Chapter 10

### I. The Place of Israel in the New Covenant - Part 2

#### C. Reasons for Israel's Rejection - Romans 10:1-21

As we have learned in Romans 9, the rejection of the Messiah by Israel and the subsequent state of unbelief are not a surprise to God. We have seen that this state of unbelief is consistent with God's promise, person, plan, and prerequisites for salvation. Paul now proceeds to list some of the reasons that Israel rejected the Messiah.

Romans chapter 10 fits in with Romans chapter 9 by giving the other side of God's sovereignty, namely, human responsibility. The basic message of Romans 9 was that God had planned the national rejection of Israel all along just as a potter chooses to make a bowl or a vase from a lump of clay. However, we must always keep in mind that whenever we talk about God's election, we must also talk about man's responsibility. Whenever we find God electing a man for salvation, we find that man responding to the message of God. Romans 9 shows that God predestinated the unbelief of Israel whereas Romans 10 shows that Israel willfully rejected the Messiah.

#### 1. Israel Did Not Understand God's Righteousness - Romans 10:1-3

**10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.**

Paul begins this chapter of Romans by revealing his heart attitude again regarding Israel, that being their salvation. This desire fits in beautifully with the previous chapter in which Paul proved that the unbelief of Israel was part of God's sovereign plan all along. However, just because God planned the rejection of Israel, Paul still longed for the salvation of Israel. This is the balance we need to achieve. It is easy for us to sit back and be complacent about evangelism with the excuse that if people are to be saved God will do it. What we must do instead is to evangelize as though the choice of salvation were totally man's and not God's. When we do this, we achieve the Biblical balance and share in the heart of Paul. Someone once asked Spurgeon why he didn't just preach to the elect. His response was "If you lift up their shirt so I can see the "E" stamped on their back then I will preach only to them". We have no idea of who the elect are so we need to preach to all men so that we might win some.

Paul gives the first reason for the failure of Israel in accepting the Messiah in verses 2 and 3. In verse 2 we read the Israel had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Paul adds his personal testimony for this since he

was one of the most religious Pharisees of his time prior to his conversion. The word translated “knowledge” is the Greek word *epignosis* which means a deep, intimate, experiential knowledge. The Jews had a superficial knowledge of God much like many today. Their problem was they lacked the intimate knowledge of God that leads to salvation. We need to realize that it is possible to have all the facts about God and all of the information for salvation and yet fall short. Superficial knowledge does not lead to salvation.

The superficial knowledge of the Jews is stated in verse 3 as evidenced in their misunderstanding of God’s righteousness. The Jews totally misunderstood the fact that the law does not provide salvation, it provides condemnation. Because of this misunderstanding they had developed a complex system of rules and regulations whereby they believed they could attain salvation. They were totally unaware that the righteousness required by God is a righteousness of the heart and not an external veneer of good works.

Jesus confronted this very issue time and time again in his earthly ministry. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus condemned the superficial righteousness of the Jewish leaders by showing that God’s standard has always been the heart. In Matthew 5:21-26 he shows that God’s definition of murder is hate in the heart, not the external act of killing. In Matthew 5:27-30 he reveals that adultery is an act of the heart and not an external glance. In fact, in verse 28 Jesus states that the internal sin of adultery precedes the external act. In Matthew 5:31-32 Jesus condemns the joke the Jews had made of marriage by saying that God’s original plan was one man and one woman for life. The Jews of Jesus’ day had made divorce as easy as filling out the paperwork. They prided themselves on their “adherence” to the law not realizing their flagrant violation of it. In the rest of Matthew 5 Jesus exposes their hypocrisy in oaths, retaliation, and love for one’s neighbor. In each case, Jesus is not redefining the law of God, he is clarifying it’s true intentions. The Jews of Jesus day had lowered the law to their level and then prided themselves in their keeping of it. They were totally unaware of the law’s original intent and their utter inability to live up to it’s demands.

Probably one of the most obvious misunderstandings the Jews had of the law of God was the law that dealt with the Sabbath. Time and time again we find Jesus being confronted by the Pharisees and leaders of Judaism because he “broke” the sabbath. Jesus seemed to take particular delight in healing on the sabbath day and exposing the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. By adding all of their petty rules and regulations on top of the original law, the Jews had totally lost the intent of the sabbath law and made the sabbath observance a burden and not a joy.

In Matthew 15 we find another confrontation that Jesus had with the Scribes and Pharisees. It seems that the scribes and Pharisees caught the disciples eating without the required ceremonial washing as defined by the rabbis. The Scribes and Pharisees then condemned the disciples for breaking the tradition of the elders which had been elevated to the place of the law. Jesus confronts their hypocrisy head-on by showing them that they have made it possible to break the law of God through their tradition. It seems that they had come up with a rule that stated they could pronounce “It is a gift” over any earthly possession they might have and thereby say that it

was reserved for God's use. If they did this, they could not use that possession to help their parents in their old age. Jesus condemns this tradition by showing that God's original intent was for children to honor their parents and support them in their old age. By using this tradition, the scribes and Pharisees circumvented the original law and allowed themselves to keep their possessions from their parents.

Because Israel had misunderstood the place and intent of the law, they had developed a system of works-righteousness which they believed would merit them favor with God. We need to be careful to understand that our righteousness does not measure up to God's righteousness, and it is God's righteousness that is required for salvation.

## 2. Israel Did Not Understand the Provision of Christ - Romans 10:4

**10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.**

The second reason Paul gives for the failure of Israel is that they did not understand the provision of Christ. This point flows logically out of the first. If the righteousness which we can obtain by the law does not give us salvation, then how do we attain unto the righteousness of God?

In verse 4 we are told that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. This can have two interpretations. First, Christ causes the law to cease being a way to righteousness thus ending the law. Secondly, Christ is the fulfillment of the law picking up where the law left off and bringing man to full righteousness before God. I believe both of these interpretations are in mind here. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus states **"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill"**. The word "destroy" in this verse means to nullify or void. The phrase "law and prophets" is a euphemism for the Old Testament scriptures. Christ himself attested to the fact that he is not here to nullify the law. In fact, in verse 18 of Matthew 5 he states **"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"**. God's revealed law is a permanent thing.

Christ ended the law as a way to righteousness in two ways. First of all, he fulfilled the moral law of God by keeping every commandment perfectly. He was the only man who ever lived that did this. Secondly, because of his sinlessness, he fulfilled the ceremonial law of God by becoming the perfect sacrifice and covering for our sin. In Hebrews 10:11-12 we read **"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God"**. Because of Christ's perfect sacrifice, legal observance of the law has forever been ended as a way to God.

In the second sense, Christ fulfilled the law by picking up where the law left off. In Galatians 3:24 we read **"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"**. The purpose of the law was to reveal the utter helplessness and sinfulness of man and force man to run to God for help. Paul's use of the word "schoolmaster" referred to a slave whose sole purpose was to train a young heir in the course of study

prescribed by the father. This slave escorted the young heir to school and made sure that the homework was completed. In short, he was a strict disciplinarian. This is exactly what the law is. It constantly condemns our actions with the intent of forcing us to run to God for provision. Christ is then that provision which is obtained by faith.

### 3. Israel Did Not Understand the Place of Faith - Romans 10:5-10

**10:5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. 10:6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) 10:7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 10:8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

The third reason for the failure of Israel that we find in this section of scripture is that they were ignorant of the place of faith. The reason for this is simple, Israel's system of works-righteousness had no place for the element of faith. Who needs faith when salvation can be earned? Because of their total misinterpretation of God's law, they had missed the key ingredient of salvation which is faith. Paul proves this by referring back to two Old Testament passages, Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

In verse 5 we find the first quote which is taken from Leviticus 18:5. **Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.**

This verse describes the righteousness which is obtained by the law. The point of this verse is that if a man is to be righteous by the law, then he needs to keep all of the law. It is not enough to keep every law but one. This verse is also quoted in Galatians 3:12 which reads "**And the law is not of faith; but, the man that doeth them shall live in them**". Paul is making the point that if a man is to attain righteousness by the law, then he must keep the entire law without fail. This is where the Jews of Paul's day made their biggest mistake. They thought that if they did their best to keep the law, they would still be able to attain unto the righteousness of the law. Paul is using this verse from Leviticus to show them that their thinking is in error. It is not possible to be justified by the law unless one keeps the entire law.

The second quote is found in verses 6-8 and is taken from Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

**For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may**

**hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.**

These three verses contrast the righteousness which is obtained by the law (which is spoken of in verse 5) with the righteousness which is obtained by faith. Paul's use of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 is very important since the Jews considered Moses to be synonymous with the law. For Paul to use Moses as an example of faith would be shocking to the average Jewish reader.

To understand these three verses, we must note that the two phrases "ascend into heaven" and "descend into the deep" are Jewish idiomatic phrases. Both of these phrases are used to refer to something that is unattainable. What Moses is saying in this passage (Deuteronomy 30:11-14), is that the righteousness of God is not something unattainable but is something very close to each person. The righteousness of the law was unattainable since the only way to attain it was to keep every law perfectly. However, the righteousness which is attained by faith is as close as believing. It is a shame that people today spend inordinate amounts of time and effort to obtain something that is very near. The righteousness of God is as close as believing, yet to many people, it is as far away as the farthest star.

Verses 9 and 10 are probably the clearest reference to salvation by faith that we can find in the scriptures. In these two verses we find a concise and clear definition of what we need to believe and how we need to believe it. These verses are best understood as referring to the quote Paul has just made from Deuteronomy 30:11-14. The reason we make this point is because verse 9 has the confession from the mouth coming before the belief in the heart. The reason for this is Paul is using the order of the mouth and heart as found in Deuteronomy 30:14. We must, however, understand that confession with the mouth and belief in the heart are both essential elements for saving faith. There are many people who believe in God, and believe all of the facts, but who are not saved because it is not a belief of the heart.

The first aspect of saving faith mentioned in these two verses is confession. The word translated "confess" in Romans 10:9-10 is the Greek word *homologeō* which means "to say the same thing as". The phrase "the Lord Jesus" would be better translated "Jesus as Lord". The point of this confession is that Jesus is Lord. Philippians 2:11 reads "**And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**". This is the confession that separates believers from unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 12:3b states "**no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost**". Only true believers can make the confession that Jesus is their Lord. For someone to claim salvation and yet deny the lordship of Christ in their life is to expose themselves as unbelievers. The question is not "will you confess Jesus is Lord?" but it is "when will you confess Jesus is Lord?". Believers have recognized the lordship of Christ in this life and have submitted themselves to it. Unbelievers will recognize the lordship of Christ in the next life, but it will be too late to escape eternal condemnation.

The second aspect of saving faith is to believe in one's heart that God raised Christ from the dead. We see two elements in this verse, faith and fact. First, we must believe in our heart. The word "heart" in this verse refers back to the Jewish concept of heart which meant the seat of emotions, will, and personality. It never referred to intellectual knowledge. This means that we

do not assent to a head-knowledge belief but to a belief that goes into the very core of our being. Many people intellectually consent to Christ but never make that part of their life and being. True faith is not a head belief, it is a heart belief. True faith means to abandon ourselves to God and believe him at his word regardless of our feelings and circumstances.

The second element found in saving faith is facts. Faith without facts is a dead faith. Many ungodly people accuse believers of putting their faith in a dream. That is not so. There are facts in which we believe. Note that Paul does not give an exhaustive list of facts in verse 9, he only gives one, the resurrection. The reason for this is that belief in the resurrection embodies every other element of salvation including virgin birth, sinless life, vicarious sacrifice, blood atonement, resurrection, and second coming. The resurrection of Christ was God's stamp of approval on what Christ did. Romans 1:4 says **"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"**. The entire message of salvation is validated by the resurrection of Christ. If Christ did not rise, the entire structure of salvation by faith crumbles into dust.

#### 4. Israel Did Not Understand the Parameters of Salvation - Romans 10:11-18

**10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 10:18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.**

The fourth reason given by Paul for the failure of Israel is that they were ignorant of the parameters of salvation. The Jews took great pride in their special place of blessing by God to the extent that they became very exclusive about it. God had intended to reach the world through the Jewish nation, but the Jews had become closed and refused to be the light of the world. They had equated salvation with Jewishness instead of equating salvation with faith as God had originally intended.

Probably one of the best examples of this Jewish attitude can be found in the Old Testament book of Jonah. Jonah was commissioned by God to preach to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. We may understand this commission by comparing it to God telling an Afghan prophet to preach his word in Moscow. At this point in Jewish history, Nineveh was the oppressor of the world. For Jonah to go to a Gentile was bad enough but to be forced to go to the oppressor of his nation was much worse. So he did what any Jewish prophet would do, he ran the other way. God however, had other plans and by a unique set of circumstances got Jonah to finally go to the capitol of Assyria and preach.

Much to Jonah's dismay, his preaching resulted in the conversion of the entire capitol of Nineveh and God staying his judgment on that city. Chagrined because the people repented, Jonah prayed to God and asked that God would kill him. To think that Gentiles, and much worse than that, Ninevites, had muscled in on God's favor was the worst thing that could happen to Jonah. In fact, Jonah showed more concern for a gourd vine than he did for the great city of Nineveh.

Peter had this same problem in the book of Acts. In chapter 10 we find God confronting Peter with one of the great truths of the New Covenant, the oneness of Jew and Gentile. If we remember the order in Acts 1:8, the disciples were to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then to the uttermost part of the earth. To the average Jew, the first two were fine but Samaria was a nation of half-breeds and the uttermost part of the earth consisted of Gentiles. We find God himself giving Peter the vision of the sheet let down from heaven to force Peter to realize that Jewishness meant nothing as far as God's favor was concerned, and that the Gentile had as much access to the message of the gospel as the Jew did.

This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 10:11-18. He is showing that the exclusive attitude Israel had towards God was never in God's original plan. Verse 11 is a quote from Isaiah 28:16 which says **"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste"**. Paul's point in this quotation is that any person who believes in Christ is not ashamed. The word translated "ashamed" is better translated "disappointed". The emphasis is "whosoever". God made no distinction in the Old Covenant and we should make no distinction in the New Covenant. Verse 12 and 13 drive this point home farther. Verse 12 states that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile for God is Lord over everyone. God has always been a God of grace to anyone who believes. Verse 13 states this in no uncertain terms, **"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"**. The message of salvation is for all men, not just Jews.

Whereas verses 11-13 describe the universality of the message of salvation, verses 14-18 describe how that message is delivered. Verses 14 and 15 ask a series of questions that give us a path from result to cause. This progression is sending (v. 15a), hearing (v. 14c), believing (v. 14b), and calling (v. 14a). God chose the nation of Israel to be the bearers of his revelation to all mankind. They were the ones sent. Unfortunately, Israel failed in this calling by hoarding the message to themselves. In fact, it is this hoarding of the message of God that in part caused God to turn to the Gentiles. Verse 15b is a quote from Isaiah 52:7 which refers to the good news of the release of Israel from captivity. Paul uses it here as an expression of the beauty of the message of salvation that brings life to all who hear and believe.

It is one thing for the message to be given, it is another for the message to be believed. Verse 16 is a reference to Isaiah 53:1, the great passage in Isaiah referring to the suffering Messiah. Paul uses it to show that not all who hear the gospel message will believe. The great tragedy of Jewish history is that they rejected their Messiah in spite of proof after proof of his authenticity. The message of salvation requires obedience on the part of man. It is not enough to intellectually assent to the truth of the gospel without obeying its requirements. True salvation requires repentance and a turning from sin.

Many people today want a salvation that keeps them from hell but makes no moral demands on their life. True salvation is a result of unconditional obedience to God with no strings attached.

Verse 17 is best seen as a summation of the previous three verses. In it we find two great truths. First, faith comes by hearing. A person cannot be saved apart from having the truth of God revealed. Secondly, and most importantly, the thing that must be heard is a message about Jesus Christ. The word translated "word" is the Greek word *hrema* and refers to a spoken message. In the Old Testament era, men were saved by believing all that God had revealed to that point. For example, Abraham was justified by leaving Haran and going to a land that God would show him. There is no way Abraham had any understanding of all of the implications of the salvation message revealed in the New Testament. However, now that Christ has died and rose again, the revelation of God is complete. Men are saved today by believing the specific facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Natural revelation is not enough.

Verse 18 is an interesting verse in that it is a quote from Psalms 19:4 which reads "**Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**". This is a reference to the universal spread of the gospel message just as nature is a universal indication of the existence of God. Many would have us believe that God is unfair in that salvation is much more difficult for heathen than it is for the average American. We must, however, realize that God delights in revealing himself to anyone who earnestly seeks after him. Any man who desires to know God will hear the message of salvation through faith in Christ. It is freely available to all regardless of where they live or what they know.

#### 5. **Israel Did Not Understand the Predictions of Scripture - Romans 10:19-21**

**10:19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. 10:20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 10:21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.**

The last reason given for the failure of Israel in Romans 10 is that Israel was ignorant of the predictions of scripture. As we have discussed in the previous nine verses, Israel was to be a light to the heathen nations around them. God intended for them to be his messengers of salvation to all men. Israel, however, hoarded the message of salvation and made it an exclusive possession of themselves alone. Because of this, God planned to use another people as the messengers of the Good News, the Gentiles.

It is interesting to examine the ministry of Christ in connection with this thought. Towards the end of his ministry he gave several parables showing that because of Israel's unbelief God would choose another people to take his message to all mankind. In Matthew 21:33-46, Christ gives the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. In this parable a man planted a vineyard and rented it out to men who were to care for it and give him the fruit of the vineyard in the time of harvest. When harvest came, the owner sent several servants to collect the harvest, all of whom were treated shamefully by the

men he had hired to care for the vineyard. Finally, he sent his own son who was murdered by the husbandmen who thought that by killing the heir they would be able to seize the vineyard for themselves. The whole meaning of this parable is found in verse 43 which reads **“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”**. Because of Israel’s rejection, the kingdom of God was given to the Gentiles.

In Matthew 22:1-14 we find another parable delivered by Christ regarding the kingdom of God. In this parable, a king made a feast in celebration of his son’s wedding. However, when he sent out the invitations, those that were invited made excuses and would not come. Some went so far as to kill some of the messengers of the king. Because the original guests would not come, the king told his servants to go out into the highways and byways and compel men to come to fill his house. The Jews were invited by God to share in the kingdom, but because of their unbelief God invited other guest to fill his house, namely Gentiles. This same idea can be found in Matthew 8:11-12 where Jesus refers to the centurion whose servant he healed by saying **“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”**. Because of Israel’s unbelief (children of the kingdom), Gentiles (those from the east and west) will have part in God’s kingdom.

Paul develops this concept by quoting a verse from Deuteronomy 32:21b which reads **“and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation”**. This verse is found in the middle of Moses’ predictions regarding the future apostasy of Israel and the subsequent judgment of God. Because Israel will turn from God, God will turn from Israel and reveal himself to another people, namely Gentiles.

Isaiah is also quoted by Paul on this matter. In Romans 10:20-21 we find a reference to Isaiah 65:1-2 which reads **“I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;”**. Because of Israel’s unbelief and rejection of God, God revealed himself to a people that were not called by his name. Israel prided itself on being associated with the one true God. The tragedy was that they refused the message of God and as a result were rejected by God. God’s great desire is to reveal himself to man. He intended to do that through the Jewish nation, but, when the Jews rejected the Messiah, God turned to the Gentiles and the Church was born. We will see this idea developed much better in Romans 11.