

Study 12: Romans Chapter 10

Introduction

Paul continues his discussion of the place and state of the Jews, and in this chapter shows his lament at their lack of repentance, and their non-acceptance of Jesus the Messiah.

Body of the Study

How does Paul describe the Jews? (10:2)

How is Christ described in relation to the Law?

How is this contrasted against righteousness under law?

How does Paul draw all of this together (vs 12)?

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

What does Paul say about obedience (vs 16)?

How do we get faith?

What was the Jews reaction?

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *If there is a parallel between the Jews, and us as christians (as we discussed in earlier studies), then what are the implications of chapter 10?*
- *What responsibilities do we have (and how do we execute it) to teach the gospel?*
- *How does Paul outline the plan of salvation in this chapter? (Or does he only give a part of the picture?)*
- Read the notes as a review of the study.
- Read chapter 11 in preparation for the next study.

Notes for study 12: Chapter 10

Introduction

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Body of the Study

How does Paul describe the Jews? (10:2)

They are zealous for God. As Jews, they are actively fulfilling the things that were commanded in the Law. Paul has already outlined the great advantage that the Jews have – their great knowledge of God – and here he compliments them again talking about not just their knowledge of God, but their great zeal to do His works.

But there is a problem with their knowledge. Yes they knew God as the true and living God, the one who created the world, and the one who led their forefathers out of Egypt. But their knowledge of Him is only surface deep. They hadn't come to a proper understanding of His righteousness. They had failed to understand that righteousness comes by faith in the Messiah (and obedience in response to that faith). Instead they thought that righteousness comes from keeping the Law of Moses.

Paul says that what they were doing was going about to establish their own righteousness. They really weren't interested in knowing and understanding God's will. They thought that by doing what the Law says that they will be made righteous.

God's whole purpose was to bring the Messiah when the time was right. Everything else led up to that. When the Messiah came, everyone was to submit to Him. But the Jews rejected the Messiah. They really didn't see the need at all – although they still had the view that the Messiah was going to come to re-establish the kingdom like it was under King David. But God had in mind a spiritual kingdom, and one where not just Jews but Gentiles also would be fellow-heirs. This was totally outside of the Jews frame of view, and so they just kept on administering the things of the Law of Moses still believing and thinking that they were doing God's work.

Notice that Paul says what the Jews needed to do was to *submit to the righteousness of God*. They needed to *do something* about it. It isn't good enough to acknowledge God and continue on with our own business. We need to *submit* to God if we are to be acceptable to Him.

How is Christ described in relation to the Law?

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Jesus said that *He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil the law and the prophets* (Matt 5:17). When He came, He put the law to an end – *He took it out of the way and nailed it to His cross* (Col 2:14). But He is also *the end of the law* in the sense that the law and the prophets foreshadowed and pointed to the time when the Messiah was to come and redeem His people. When Jesus came, the prophecies were fulfilled – and so Jesus completed their prophecies (well, most of them, since there are some prophecies that point to the end of the world and its destruction – but Jesus fulfilled all of the messianic prophecies). Not only did Jesus fulfil them, He fulfilled them perfectly and completely.

Righteousness (that is, being made right with God) was established by Christ and only by Him. Until Christ came, no matter how hard anyone tried to keep the Law (of Moses – or any other system of law for that matter) they could not succeed. Whilst righteousness could (at least theoretically) be established by keeping the law perfectly, in practice it was an impossibility. So, how did righteousness come? It came in the person of Jesus. He came and kept the Law perfectly

and established righteousness – that is, never before (or since) has any man ever lived a perfect life. And by our faith in God, expressed through His son Jesus, and our obedience to that faith, then we take on the righteousness that Jesus brought. He becomes righteousness for us. Paul says, “...*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes...*” (10:4 NKJV)

How is this contrasted against righteousness under law?

Moses said that righteousness under law comes by doing (keeping perfectly) the things that the law required

LEV 18:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. ³ You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. ⁴ You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. ⁵ Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD. (Lev 18:1-5 NIV)

Under a system of law, righteousness can only be obtained if we keep it perfectly. If we don't then the full force of the law comes down on us, and the full force of breaking God's law is that we shall not escape His righteous judgement and wrath.

But we can now establish righteousness (through Christ) in a different way. We are made righteous by faith. Ignore the quotes and parenthesis for a moment – Paul says “...*righteousness of faith says* (comes about by) ... *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...*” (10:6,9 NKJV)

Simply said, we take on Jesus' righteousness by our faith in Him.

Now, let's look at the parenthesis: The book of Deuteronomy is *the second reading of the Law*. Moses brings the people together and speaks to them (Deut 29:2). It will be the last thing that he says to them, for he is soon to die and be replaced by Joshua who will lead the people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. He tells them that they will have prosperity after turning to the Lord, and then he gives them a choice – the choice of life or death – life with the Lord, or death without Him. He says:

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

The choice of life or death is within the reach of each and every one of them. It is up to them to obey God in order to get it. Interesting. This is the verse that Paul quotes, when he says that righteousness and salvation (being made right with God) is available to each and every one of us! It does not come from trying to keep a system of law, but it is available to us in exactly the same way that it was available to the Israelites – by faith, and obedience in response to that faith. “...*For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation...*” (10:10 NKJV).

Paul next quotes from Isaiah 28:16 “...*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame...*” (10:11NKJV). The idea of *shame* has special reference to the judgement day, (are we ashamed of Him, and will He be ashamed of us?), and is discussed in some detail in McGarvey¹.

How does Paul draw all of this together (vs 12)?

There is no distinction to be made between Jew and Gentile. This is what he has been driving towards. Paul previously quoted from Is 28:16 in 9:33. In that place, the quote was “*He who believes...*” In 10:11 Paul strengthens his argument “*whosoever believes...*”, showing that is was

¹ Commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans: Gospel Light Publishing Co, Delight Arkansas, p. 428

not just directed to the Jews, but to the Gentiles also [and before you criticise me, I know some translations have *whoever* in both places – but some have it as I have said].

The argument of salvation to all is articulated clearly by Paul, that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile – and God is rich to all who call upon Him. He is about to outline what this means.

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

In older times (and perhaps even in some places it still happens, although the term is not as common as it used to be), the police or law officers would come “In the name of the Queen”. What was meant was clearly that they would come with the full authority of the monarch (the full force and authority of the law). So, *in the name of* means *with the authority of*. When we call upon the name of the Lord, it means that we appeal to the authority of God. We do not have any power ourselves for our salvation – and it is only through God’s grace that we are saved. We appeal to Him.

When Paul was converted, Ananias told him “...and now why are you waiting, arise and be baptised and wash away your sins calling on His name...” (Acts 22:16). What Paul was told to deal was to appeal to and submit himself to God’s authority in his obedience to the gospel.

Paul next outlines a series of rhetorical questions – questions to which the answer is obvious – as he takes the Romans down a track of logic:

- Whoever call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (those who submit to His authority)
- How will they call if they have not believed? (Without faith it is impossible to please God, and how can they submit to something if they don’t believe?)
- How can they believe if they have not heard? (Faith comes by hearing the word – not by some “mystical” way in which God acts directly on our hearts – but our hearts are opened to God by His word)
- How can they hear without a preacher? (Every case of conversion in the New Testament came about by a preacher teaching someone else – theoretically it might happen that they could discover God’s plan of salvation for themselves, but it just didn’t happen that way in the NT)
- How shall they preach without being sent? (The preachers need to be sent out – by a church – and the church therefore has the responsibility of not just preaching the gospel where they are, but in supporting others to preach it *to the uttermost parts of the earth*).

What does Paul say about obedience (vs 16)?

Not everyone has obeyed. Paul quotes Isaiah again (Is 53:1), and says that they didn’t all believe. Look very closely at what Paul says in this verse, and how he connects the two parts of the verse.

The reason that people don’t *obey* the gospel is because they don’t *believe* the gospel. It makes sense when we think about it, If we truly believe what God has said, then we will have no trouble in doing what He says. That is exactly the kind of faith that Abraham demonstrated, and the response that Paul demonstrated when God told him what to do through Ananias.

How do we get faith?

Faith comes through the word of God. We do not figure it out for ourselves, and we do not inherit it from someone else – even our parents. Someone once said *God has no grandchildren*. We cannot claim a relationship with God because our parents had one, or because we went to Sunday school, or because we were brought up in the church.

It is commonly taught that faith comes to us when God moves and opens our hearts so that we can hear Him, and Paul’s conversion is then cited as an example. For a discussion on how God

works in salvation, and the place of the Holy Spirit in conversion, see my notes on Acts, “Study 14”.

Paul expresses it clearly and plainly for us here “*Faith comes by hearing the word of God*” He has just outlined in the rhetorical logic what we need to do to ensure that everyone can hear the word, and he goes there again.

Have they not heard? (10:18)

The answer is that the word has gone out to all the earth and to the ends of the world. This is an interesting statement when half of the world was then unknown, and would have to be taken in the context of the then known world. The Roman letter was written about AD 57/58 – 25 years after Christ. There was an explosive dispersion after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 11:19), and the gospel had gone to Africa via the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:39). Further, Paul had travelled widely throughout the Roman Empire by this time, and many churches had been established on trading routes – such as at Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica. The explosive power of the gospel throughout the then known world is evidenced by archaeological evidence of the churches that existed around that time. There is also some evidence that some of the apostles travelled to India and Britain².

What was the Jews reaction?

Paul now brings home the point that he opened with at the beginning of the chapter– what about Israel? They have (by and large) rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and in doing so have rejected God. They rejected Him in several ways, firstly because Jesus is God, and to reject Jesus is to reject God, secondly, God sent Jesus to be THE Prophet. They rejected all of the prophets who had gone before (Acts 7:52), and they rejected Jesus who had been prophesied to come. Thirdly, God appointed Jesus to be the Messiah. In rejecting Jesus they have rejected God who appointed Him.

Did Israel know? Of course they did! They had every opportunity to repent, and turn to the Lord. But where Israel (mostly) rejected God, the Gentiles have turned to Him. The result was that the Jews became jealous and hardened their hearts further against God.

God’s final consideration of Israel is found from Isaiah 65:2 “*All day long have I stretched forth my hand to a disobedient and obstinate people*” (10:21). God has been extremely patient with Israel, but they are not interested in obeying Him. But that doesn’t mean that God doesn’t want them to repent and come back to Him.

The bottom line is, that the Jews have exactly the same opportunity to obey God in faith as the Gentiles do, and to turn to Him. In fact they have a greater opportunity because they have a greater advantage of knowing the true and living God.

² See McBirnie, William “The Search for the Twelve Apostles” Living Books, Tyndale Publishers, Wheaton Illinois.