

Day Six: Romans 9:30-10:15 Salvation Through Explicit Faith in Christ Alone

Many people struggle with the explicit point of 10:13-15, and the implicit point of the entire chapter, that only those who call on the name of Jesus will be saved, so the unevangelized are eternally lost. I offer three brief reflections on a complex topic.

This is not some esoteric or sadistic trick that God deliberately pulls on the world. First, no one is condemned for not believing in Jesus, if they have not heard of him. They are still condemned, but in terms of the light they had, not in terms of what they never knew. (The sad reality, though, is that none of us lives up to the light we have, and few of us would claim to do so.) Second, God is not being deliberately obscurantist. The problem lies in human nature, not in divine malfeasance. By nature, people in all cultures seek to earn divine approval through special deeds; in other words, we attempt to obligate God to save us. It is only the gospel of Christ which teaches that salvation comes solely to those who admit that there is nothing virtuous they can do to obligate God, and instead throw themselves on the mercy of God. Finally, any problem here is not God's, but ours: he provided Christ, and commissioned the church to spread the word to all peoples. It is not his fault – but ours, and our predecessors – that the task is not complete two millennia later.

Pray that God will raise up more from our midst to carry his message to those who have never heard the gospel.

Day Seven: Romans 9:30-33; 10:1-4; 10:16-21 The Sad Reality

The sad reality undergirding this entire chapter is that Israel, which had the promises of God, his blessings, and such many natural advantages, ended up forfeiting the privilege of God's blessing. The church today has those same promises, as Paul reminded us in Romans 9:1-5. What a sad reality if some fail to take advantage of the opportunity presented to them. Pray for any in our church who may have neglected such opportunity for years, that they will turn to Christ for forgiveness and salvation.

**Self-Reliant or God-Dependent
Romans 9:30-10:21**

In last week's text, Paul addressed the question, "Why is Israel not saved?" Is it because God failed to keep his promises? No, Paul insists, it was because God never made those promises to all of Israel in the first place, but only to some, only to those who were eventually saved.

In this week's text, Paul continues to address the same question: "Why is Israel not saved?" This time he offers a different, and seemingly converse, answer: because Israel did not fulfill the necessary condition.

Are these two answers compatible? That is the question for next week. For this week, we reflect on human culpability that results in a failure to attain salvation. Several of the paragraphs in this section make the same point. Instead of being bored with the repetition, use the opportunity for reflection and meditation on any vestige of the same basic flaw in you.

Day One: Romans 9:30-33 The Irony of Righteousness

To observant Jews, gentiles were generally disgusting: both idolaters and immoral. Nonetheless, gentiles commonly attained a righteous standing with God. Jews, on the other hand, were often painfully diligent in obeying the Law, yet they did not attain a righteous standing with God.

The reason for the odd discrepancy? First-century Jews worked hard on obeying the law, and as a result, rejected the message that their efforts were futile. Gentiles, ironically, could not deny their spiritual and moral inadequacy, at least by Jewish standards, and so more readily threw themselves on the mercy offered in Christ.

Which pattern fits your pre-conversion past more closely: hard work to please God, or grateful embrace of a salvation unearned yet freely

bestowed? Which more closely fits your current mindset: the burdensome obligation to perform an endless series of duties in order to please God, or a sense of gratitude for his grace and kindness? Today provides an excellent opportunity to celebrate the latter.

Day Two: Romans 10:1-4 A Passion for the Lost

While Paul clearly rejects contemporary Jewish efforts to attain holiness, he did not disparage them, their ideas, or their efforts. Even though he suffered persecution from some Jewish authorities, he commends their zeal, and attributes their error to ignorance not malice.

Who within your sphere of influence genuinely seeks God, but does not understand how he may be found? Pray for a non-threatening opportunity to share gently with them, without disparaging either them or their views.

Day Three: Romans 10:5-11 Christ Replaces the Law

Here Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14, some of Moses' last words to Israel. Moses was originally referring to the Law that he brought down from Sinai: the Israelites did not need to climb mountains or descend into the sea in the search for salvation; it was readily available in the Law which Moses provided them. Now, Paul says, the Law is supplanted by Christ, and the gospel message about him. They need not search heaven and earth for salvation: it is readily available to them – and to us – in the gospel. 'In your mouth': instead of reciting Law, they can now call on the name of the Lord. 'In your heart': instead of internalizing Law, they put their trust in Christ. Notably, Paul omits a word repeated three times in Deut 30:12-14, 'obey'. Instead of obeying Law, salvation now entails putting faith in Christ.

Take time today to thank God, both for sending Christ and the gospel to man, and for those who shared the gospel with you in particular.

Day Four: Romans 10:12-15 Everyone Needs to Hear

The shift from Law to Christ, and from obedience to trust, entailed a third shift as well: from Israel to all peoples. This is not just an invitation to us gentiles, that we can come to God. It is also a commission to us who have the gospel, to spread it where it has never been heard. This can be as close as friends and colleagues, who, even in this country may never have heard that salvation comes not through good works or a moral life, but through faith in Christ. But, of course, Paul's vision is worldwide, especially 'unreached peoples', those who have no access to the gospel within their culture.

This past Sunday you heard about one couple from our midst heading to serve among unreached peoples. Last year, several others went out. Pray for their adjustments to their new living situations, for their training, and for their effectiveness as they begin to reach out to those who never heard the gospel.

Day Five: Romans 10:16-21 Rejecting the Gospel

Up to this point, Paul has been gentle in his criticism of the majority of Jews, who rejected the gospel: they pursued righteousness, even though they did not obtain it (9:30-33); they were zealous for God, even though their zeal was misinformed (10:1-4).

Now, however, he speaks more plainly. As Isaiah complained centuries earlier, though faith comes through hearing the message, Israel heard and understood, but rejected it. This rounds out the portrait of Israel: diligent in pursuit of righteousness, zealous for God, yet obstinate in disobedience.

Pray for ethnic Jews whom you know, pray for Israel as a people and a nation. And while this applies primarily to Jews, likely you know other non-Jews who have heard the gospel, but resisted it for years; pray also for them.