

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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The Epistle to the Romans Dispensational, Israel's Present, chapter 10

[The New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]

Welcome to our talk on Romans chapter 10. The subject is Israel's present situation during the Church dispensation, the day of God's grace. Our previous talk covered Israel's past and the next talk in the series will cover Israel's future. During the day of God's grace every person in the world, whether Jew or Gentile, can receive the blessing of sins forgiven by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. However, in a future day Israel will become prominent in the world as the nation God will exalt over all the nations of the world. It should be noted that Israel's exaltation will be after the Church has been raptured to glory.

Before proceeding further, let me state that all Scripture quotations will be taken from the New King James version unless otherwise stated.

Paul's heartache for Israel, (vv.1-3).

Let us read verses 1 – 3,

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."

It is not surprising that Paul has a deep desire in his heart for the salvation of the people of his own nation and his prayer or supplication to God is focused on this. Every Christian should be focused upon reaching their fellow countrymen with God's good news. That is why there are Gospel meetings and campaigns, Sunday school and youth activities and other related outreach work that takes place in our own country. But this work must start with two things, a longing to see blessing and supported by constant supplication to God that in His grace He would still work mightily in the UK.

Paul, however, sees difficulties as far as his countrymen are concerned. They have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge. They have failed to see that God gives through Christ the true righteousness, not according to the keeping of the law or any other works that are without faith. Salvation is not achieved by our own efforts. We and the Jewish nation need to realise we are hopelessly lost. No amount of religious activity will bring about salvation, the forgiveness of sins and the certainty of eternal life with Christ in heaven. Repentance needs to be genuine and faith in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to gain salvation's blessing; there is no other way!

Christ ends the law, (vv.4-7).

Let us read verses 4 – 7,

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.' But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

Our Lord Jesus Christ once and for all ended any possibility of being righteous by the law. The nation of Israel held Moses as one of the great founding fathers of the nation. Moses was held in high regard and the religious leaders of the nation always deferred to what Moses had said and written. But this was all now finished. Moses emphasised the need to keep the whole law in order to live. If you transgress one item of the law, no matter how seemingly trivial, then you were condemned. As I am preparing this radio talk, I have just been reading about the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day (Numbers 15). Because the man had broken the law on the Sabbath day, God's judgment on him was severe. The man was condemned to death. Why such severity? The law had just been given and he was defying God. Under the dispensation of the law life was hard. So, the law given by God through Moses was harsh and inflexible. The law was a school master to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Many today have still not learned this lesson.

We now come to the crux of the matter in these four verses, the righteousness of faith. We do not need the Lord Jesus Christ to come down again from heaven; He has already done this. His manhood has been established, He is the Son of Man. Neither is it necessary for the Lord to lay down His life and go into death again. The Lord has done that, and the work of salvation is now complete. Based on this finished work, salvation can be obtained and is available to all, Jew and Gentile.

Only confess and believe, (vv.8-13).

Let us read the next six verses, 8 – 13,

"But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

If in verse 7 Paul clearly states that there is no need for the Lord Jesus to come again and die, he now comes to the positive. He states that those to whom he is writing, they have the necessary word of God near to them. That is the word of faith. It is not the law and doing but believing what is done and by whom. Chapter 5 verse 1 clearly stated that believers are justified by faith. This Scripture and much of what Paul has already written to the Romans gives abundant testimony to the fact that blessing is through faith in Jesus Christ. He states that they have it already in their hearts and on their lips. It is this message, that salvation is through faith, that Paul has constantly preached.

We now come to two of the loveliest verses in Romans, if not in all the Scriptures, verses 9-10. There is a Sunday School chorus about the first of these verses

Romans ten and nine
Is a favourite verse of mine,
Confessing Christ as Lord,
I'm saved by grace divine.
For there the words of promise
In golden letters shine,
Romans ten and nine.

Note that there is the confession and the believing. Confess with the mouth, expressing what is real in the heart and it is emphasised that there must be the inward reality – in the heart. What is being believed? What is being confessed? That God has raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. In Corinthians, Paul reminds the believers at Corinth that if there is no resurrection then Christians are the most miserable of people. Belief in this fact is fundamental to the Christian faith. It also implies the acceptance of the full work of salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus, the cross, the sacrifice for sin, exhausting the judgment of God and bringing about the perfect means of salvation to whoever believes in Jesus. Oh yes, verse nine is an amazing verse!

Verse ten reinforces what verse nine has just made plain. 'For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Here we are made right in the sight of God. God looks on the heart and sees what is true. But what about confession unto salvation? Telling others of this work of grace in your heart sets out our standard that we are a Christian. It avoids fudging the real-life change that has taken place. Everyone will know where you stand, and it avoids future difficulties. It does not mean that life will be necessarily easier, because the Lord Jesus clearly warned His disciples that in the world, they would have problems. Here Paul is speaking about practical day to day salvation.

Paul is writing to both Jew and Gentile and we should just say that verse 9 is true for both. There is only one way to be saved. This still holds true today. Verses 11 – 13 emphasise once again that the good news of salvation is open to all and the believer does not lose out in any way by becoming a Christian. In fact, it is the very reverse because there is so much blessing that far outstrips what the Jews believed; the law given by Moses was inferior. Also, the pagan religions of the Gentiles had nothing of any worth when compared to the glorious Gospel concerning Christ Jesus.

This Gospel treats both Jew and Gentile the same, no difference, for all are dead in sin, no life towards the one true God. In contrast, the Lord is rich in every way towards those who have come to Him in saving faith. It is important to notice the words 'shall be saved.' This is definite. It is not a 'might be saved;' there is no uncertainty about what God has promised.

Israel refused to believe, (vv.14-15).

Let us now read verses 14 – 15,

"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?

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'"

In verses 14 – 15 we have four questions posed by Paul.

1. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?
2. And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?
3. And how shall they hear without a preacher?
4. And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

The heart felt call needs someone to clearly point out the person who can provide salvation. There needs to be a proclamation of the saving Gospel message which at its heart is Christ the Saviour. In order that a proclamation can go forth, there needs to be a preacher. Finally, a preacher needs to be sent.

Paul refers to Isaiah 52:7 in verse 15 of our chapter. 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' This is a delightful verse which speaks of the beautiful work of the Gospel preacher and the message of salvation. The world today is full of anger, hate, warfare, abuse – the list is almost endless. This contrasts with the good news of peace that is full of good things. In chapter 3:17, Paul states that the godless do not know the way of peace. Just turn on the radio and television, read the papers or the internet news and there is a deluge of everything that is wrong with this world - but there is no peace! Who sends the preacher? The Lord Jesus just before He ascended into heaven gave the commission to all His disciples, and it still holds good today for all Christians, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' Mark 16:15. You might say but I am not qualified to be a missionary! The world is just outside your front door.

The four questions, as stated above, have been answered by the messenger of peace. After the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven there were plenty of preachers in Israel but although thousands believed, the vast majority would not believe. What was true about two thousand years ago is still true today. But it is not only for Israel but for every nation around the world. The message of peace is still rejected by the many but thankfully there are those in every nation who do accept the Gospel message.

Israel disobedient to the good news, (vv.16-18).

Let us read verses 16 – 18,

"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.'"

In these three verses Paul re-emphasises the disobedience of the nation, 'But they have not all obeyed the gospel.' Paul was very aware of the general state of the people and could write that they have not all obeyed, but in stating that, he is saying that some have obeyed. Paul quotes from Isaiah 53:1, and it seems that Isaiah had the same problem as Paul in his day and as we do in our day; people will not believe. Isaiah was prophesying of the Messiah's coming. Paul preached, as do we, that Jesus has come. Not only has He come but the work of salvation has been accomplished. It only needs the hearts and minds of people to be opened to the reality of coming judgment and that salvation is solely through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His completed work on the cross. The preaching must go on as it is only by hearing the message and the exercise of faith in God's word that forgiveness of sins can be obtained.

Paul now poses both a question and supplies the answer in the above verse 18, 'Have they not heard? Yes indeed: Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.' Paul is quoting from Psalm 19:4, it is worth stating the first four verses,

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun."

The writer of the Psalm is referring to God's marvellous creation. Creation has its own speech which is broadcast day and night. Creation's language is universal as it goes out around the world. Every nation can understand what is being said! The display of creation teaches, it reveals knowledge, there is no need to dream up fancy ideas such as the 'big bang' and evolution. The big picture that is being made known is the 'Glory of God.' Based on this Gospel message alone should cause faith in a majestic, all powerful, God. So, if you are not listening to, or have never heard, the message concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul states that you have no excuse because creation with its message is all around us.

Israel is without excuse, (vv.19-21).

Finally, let us read verses 19 – 21,

"But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.' But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.' But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'"

We now come to our concluding verses of chapter 10 regarding Paul's argument as to Israel's current situation. Once again, Paul raises the question as to whether Israel were aware of God speaking to them. Paul refers first to Moses writing in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 32:21b, where it states,

"I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation."

How true this was! When the Lord Jesus was here, He highlighted situations from Israel's history which showed how God went outside the nation and provided blessing, but this provoked the people to anger instead of driving them to God.

"And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian," Luke 4:27.

Also, their own prophet Elijah, when a famine had plagued the land and he needed supporting,

"To none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow," Luke 4:26.

Paul was also a prime example when he referred to his own commission by the Lord Jesus as he spoke to the crowd from the steps of the fortress in Acts 22:21 – 22.

"Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles'. And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!'"

Paul next refers to their prophet Isaiah, chapter 65. Although Paul only quotes from verses 1 and 2, there are many other verses in the chapter which condemn the nation for their idolatry and disobedience. The chapter is not all condemnation; there is hope of a deliverer and the promise of a new heaven and a new earth plus the restoring of joy in Jerusalem and the nation; but that is for a future day.

To conclude, Israel as a nation, in the present day, is estranged from God and has rejected the Lord Jesus. Little do they realise that it is the same Person whom they reject who will, in a coming day, be their national Saviour. Today He is the Saviour of all who accept Him into their hearts by faith. I quote in closing those lovely verses from Romans 10 mentioned earlier.

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Thank you for listening to our Truth for Today talk, Romans chapter 10, dispensational, Israel's present situation, talk number T1158.

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