

FPFWC Christian Development



Standing in the Faith

May 2024

Spring Quarter

May 25, 2024

Lesson #4 – Who Has Believed?

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Romans 10:1-17

ICE BREAKERS-

1. Why is it important that we proclaim and live the gospel message? (vs. 14)
2. What are ways to respond to rejection when we share the gospel message?
3. Think of one person who needs to hear the gospel and think of something you can do to help him or her hear it.

Key Verse: “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.—Romans 10:9

LESSON BACKGROUND –

Just how comprehensive *is* the good news of Jesus the Messiah? The entire book of Romans is concerned with this question. Romans 1–8 sets forth proof of the need and extent of God’s mercy available to those who trust Him with their lives. God has announced salvation for all who trust (see Romans 1:16–17). The gospel of grace has come to light for all. The extension of God’s offer of salvation to Gentiles does not exclude Jews. Chapters 9–11 advance the discussion in part by considering the fate of Israel. The depth of God’s love extends to Israel as well as the Gentiles (11:33–36).

Romans 10 reflects on Paul’s hope that the good news that Jesus is the Messiah and Lord will also come to his fellow Jews. God promised salvation to Israel, and God keeps promises at all times. Therefore, the promise of salvation must come to Israel. The hard division between Jews and Christians did not occur until several generations after Paul’s lifetime. Paul himself never used the word “Christians” in his writings, though it had begun to circulate within the church. He likely did not anticipate the centuries of hostility between the two groups or the habit of those thinking themselves to be Christians of insulting and even persecuting Jews. The hard division that Paul experienced and wrote about was between Jews (whether Christ-followers or not) and Gentiles (whether God-fearers or not). The gospel of reconciliation and peace in Christ reaches all, allowing God both to keep the ancient promises to Israel and to add the Gentiles to the faithful community.

LESSON COMMENTARY

Romans 9:30–10:17 God Has Not Cheated Israel (9:30–10:21)

Many believers are understandably troubled by Rm 9, but beginning in 9:30 and running throughout chap. 10, Paul developed a more familiar doctrine, that of man's responsibility. In chap. 9, Israel rejects Jesus because God hardened her. In chap. 10, Israel rejects Jesus because she has freely chosen to do so.

9:30–10:4. Gentiles ... attained righteousness ... which is by faith (v. 30) provides an illustration of 9:16. Israel, however, did not attain righteousness, for they were "pursuing the law for righteousness" (v. 31) (a better translation than pursuing a law of righteousness), and seeking righteousness by works and not by faith (vv. 31–32). Paul cited Is 28:16 in v. 33, and based on its use in 10:11, understood it messianically as a reference to Jesus. As in 9:3, Paul expressed his longing that his kinsmen find salvation in Christ (10:1), another indication that Paul was writing about God's choice of individuals to receive salvation, not His choice regarding what roles people groups would play in history. On 10:3, cf. the note on Php 3:2–12. The end of the law indicates that Jesus, by His death, brought the era of living under the law to a close. Just as the finish line is both the goal and the end of a race, Jesus is the goal of the law inasmuch as it anticipated and pointed toward Him, and He is the end of the law since He brings its era of governing life to a close (see the comments on Mt 5:17–19; Rm 3:21–26; Gl 3:10–4:11).

10:5–13. In v. 5, Paul alluded to Lv 18:5 (see the note there), and with it censures unbelieving Israel (see the similar point of allusions to Lv 18:5 in Neh 9:29; Ezk 18:9; 20:11). He indicates that if one insists on establishing his righteousness with God by keeping the law, then he will live (have eternal life) only if he actually keeps the law. But Paul already demonstrated the futility of this in chaps. 1–3. In vv. 6–8, Paul cited Dt 9:4 and 30:11–14, where Moses commanded the people to obey the Lord. As in Moses' day when God graciously took the initiative to make the law readily available to the Jewish people so they could obey it, so also in Paul's day He made the gospel accessible as well. Verses 9–10 are sometimes cited to support the idea that one must publicly and verbally confess Christ in order to be saved. Confessing is a result of true saving faith and an evidence of it (cf. 1Tm 6:12; Ti 1:16), and lack of confession may indicate lack of salvation. Much of the apostolic preaching included an emphasis on Christ's resurrection (cf. Ac 2:14–40; 3:12–26; 10:34–43; 13:16–41; 17:16–31), and it is faith in a resurrected Christ that saves one (believe ... that God raised Him, v. 9). In vv. 11–13, Paul cited Is 28:16 again (cf. 9:33) and expanded on the implications of "whoever believes" in vv. 12–13. In v. 13, Paul cited Jl 2:32, emphasizing the universal availability of the gospel.

10:14–17. These verses ask questions that ultimately receive an affirmative answer in v. 18 (Indeed they have). Regarding the need to get the gospel to the Jewish people, messengers have been recruited (v. 14c), sent out (v. 15a), the word of faith has been preached (v. 14b), the message has been heard (v. 14b,

17, 18), and the message has been understood (vv. 19–20). So, what is the problem? The problem is, they did not believe it (vv. 16–17). Paul's point is that God cannot be blamed for not doing enough to get the gospel to the Jewish people. The problem, at least in chap. 10, resides with Israel's refusal to believe the gospel. Romans 10:14–15 are often used as motivational verses to bolster world evangelization, but the context makes it clear that Paul had in mind the Jewish people, and that, even in his day, the gospel had made extensive inroads into Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world. But the mission to the Jewish people has not been completed.

LESSON NUGGET – Why did Israel stumble over Christ and reject Him?

Because they did not understand the kind of righteousness God wanted or how to get it. Like the Pharisees, they thought only of righteous works and could not comprehend a righteousness that comes by faith (Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21). Despite Paul's broken heart (Romans 10:1) and God's outstretched hands (Romans 10:21; Isaiah 65:2), Israel did not believe: but the Gentiles did believe, and God saved them! When you feel discouraged in your witnessing, remember Paul; continue caring, praying, and sharing the good news. Keep those feet beautiful!

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary