

Romans 9 v 30 to 10 v 21: Israel's rejection of God

In Romans 9 to 11 Paul deals with the great problem of the rejection of the Messiah by the majority of the nation of Israel, and God's apparent 'rejection' of them. Two questions arise: (a) Has God broken his promises? and (b) if not, how will they be fulfilled?

Paul addresses the first question in Chapters 9 and 10, and deals with the second question in Chapter 11. Verse 19 of Chapter 9 posed a key question: "If it's all a matter of God's sovereign choice, how can God still find fault with us? How can anyone go against God's will?" Yet God says we are responsible for our beliefs and behaviour, and thus for our eternal destiny.

Chapter 9 focused on God's sovereignty towards man; in Chapter 10 Paul's focus shifts to man's responsibility towards God...

Israel's unbelief (Romans 9 v 30 to 10 v 4)

Paul has already shown in the earlier chapters of his letter to the Romans that the only possible way to be saved is through faith, not through works of the law; and that this salvation comes only through the work of a crucified Saviour – which was a stumbling block to Israel.

- What two ways of seeking acceptance with God are contrasted here? How are they shown to be mutually exclusive?
- The Jews were "ignorant of the righteousness of God" (Romans 10 v 2), but that wasn't their only problem. What else was the cause of Israel's failure?

The message of salvation to all (Romans 10 v 4 to 15)

"Unbelief really puts a sad slur upon Christ. [It] talks about going up to heaven: but suppose it were needed that somebody should ascend to heaven, that would imply that Jesus had never come down from thence to reveal the Father. [It] talks of descending into the abyss, as if Christ had never come up from the dead. The fact is, all that can be done has been done. Why do you want to do what is already done? All that can be felt has been felt; why do you want to feel it? 'It is finished,' said Christ, why do you strive to do it over again?" (Spurgeon)

- Righteousness by faith – what does Paul say about (a) its simplicity; (b) its universal application; and (c) the necessity of proclaiming it?
- What light do these verses shed upon our responsibility (a) to proclaim the Gospel; and (b) to hear and respond to it?
- Notice the progression in verses 14 and 15 – call, believe, hear, preach; "sent" by whom? See Acts 13 v 2 to 4. Why do you think "the feet of those who preach the good news" are called "beautiful"?
- So, what is the "good news"? Can you summarise it in a few sentences? This is done in many places in the New Testament. See for example John 3 v 16 and 1 Corinthians 15 v 3 and 4.

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The prophets foretold Israel's rejection of the gospel (Romans 10 v 16 to 21)

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel” (v 16). If salvation is so simple, and available to all who trust in the person and work of Jesus, then why does Israel seem to be separated from God? Because many among them have not trusted in God's Word through Isaiah or other messengers of the gospel.

- What do the passages from Deuteronomy (v 19) and Isaiah (v 20, 21) tell us about the character of God?
- How is Israel described in verse 21?
- Why do you think God (through Moses) wanted to make Israel “jealous” (v 19)?
- How did he achieve this? This theme is explored further in Romans 11...

Prayer – O Lord, help us to echo Paul whose heart's desire and prayer to you for his brethren was that they might be saved. Help us to be faithful in prayer, and to share the good news so that our friends and colleagues will hear, believe and be saved. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.