Righteousness And Rejection
Romans 10:5-13

Introduction

Paul has been teaching us about Israel’s spiritual history. In chapter 9 we looked at the past; in chapter 10 we look at the present; and in chapter 11 we will look at Israel’s spiritual future. In chapter 9 Paul draws special attention to God’s sovereignty. In chapter 10 the focus is God’s justice.

Some suggest that God’s sovereignty may somehow diminish man’s choice or human responsibility. Paul affirms God’s right to choose and predestine; but Paul also places the responsibility for man’s lost and sinful condition right where it belongs; with the human individual. Human beings cannot hide behind God’s awesome sovereignty to excuse or explain man’s depravity and sinful state. Paul affirms that if people are lost they are lost because of their willful rejection of Christ, the gospel and grace. The central thought of Romans chapter 10 can be summed up in a single sentence: “God has rejected Israel because her people have rejected His Messiah, Jesus Christ. In fact, that is the only reason God ever rejects anyone” (see Chuck Swindoll; Learning To Walk By Grace; p.62).

Remember the key word in this chapter is righteousness. The Jews wanted righteousness but were unwilling to obtain righteousness by faith. The Bible speaks of two kinds of righteousness: “works righteousness” which involves obeying the law and “faith righteousness” which involves accepting the free gift of salvation for all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the beginning of this chapter Paul outlines the reason for the Jewish rejection (vv.1-13); he will later address the remedy for that rejection (vv.14-17); and conclude with the result of that rejection (vv.18-21).

Now Paul will describe the principle of faith (vv.5-11); and the promise of salvation (vv.12-13).

The Source Of God’s Righteousness (v.5)

Romans 10:5 (NKJV) 5For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”

Paul contrasts the language of works righteousness and faith righteousness. Moses (Leviticus 18:5) writes that the person who achieves the righteousness that the law demands shall live by doing so. The OT text reads; “ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which is a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD”.

The emphasis is on achieving, obtaining, doing. No one disputes there is a standard, a measure which the law requires. The problem is that sinful human beings do not keep the law perfectly and perpetually. And the laws’ punishment for disobedience is death. The law was given to people who were already sinners already condemned. Even if they could keep the law perfectly and perpetually from that day forward there was already the sentence of death hanging over their heads for previous sin. God requires payment for sin.

Paul has made a convincing argument of what the law can and cannot do. The law cannot produce life (2 Cor.3:6) “who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life”.

The law cannot make us righteous before God (Rom.3:20); “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law cannot take away sin (Hebrews 4:1-4); the Law cannot cancel God’s promise to Abraham (see Gal.
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3:16-17) where Paul argues that the promise given to Abraham preceded the law by 430 years! The law won’t last forever (see Hebrews 8:6-13).

What exactly does the law do? What is the purpose of the law? Paul argues that it relates primarily to Israel (Rom.2:14); it removes our ignorance of sin (Rom.3:20; Rom.7:7); it reflects the character of God (Rom.7:12) and regulates society and exists in part for the unbeliever (see 1 Tim.1:9-10; “knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and the disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for mans layers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers (human trafficking!). for liars, for perfurred persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” The law reveals our carnality (Rom.7:14) “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin”. The law reinforces our need for a Savior that justification is by faith alone” (see David Hocking; pp.323-325).

The Service Of God’s Righteousness (vv.6-8)

6But 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)

What is the language of faith? Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12,13; which reads; “It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?”

Many scholars have pointed out that the immediate context of Deuteronomy 30:12-13 is not about faith or the gospel! The context is the Law—and specifically to turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul”(Deut.30:10). God is saying the law—is not hidden—the law is not distant—the law is not accessible. A human being does not have to go to heaven to find it or across the ocean it is near at hand—ready—waiting to be obeyed!

But Paul takes these words and reapplies them to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The language of faith and the language of the gospel does not require you to climb to heaven or swim the oceans. You do not have to go to heaven and drag Jesus off his throne and bring him back to the earth. For one thing—that is impossible—you cannot make Jesus leave His throne—and the second thing—it is unnecessary—because Jesus has already come down from heaven at His incarnation!

7or; “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

The abussos Paul writes about is the place of departed spirits; in every other place in the NT (Luke 8:31 and seven times in the book of Revelation) it refers to the dwelling place of demons. In Luke the word is translated “deep” and in Revelation “bottomless pit” or bottomless.
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When Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:13 he changes it from “who will go over the sea” to who will descend into the grave (the place of the dead—or the place of departed spirits) to bring Christ up from the dead. Again that would be impossible—and unnecessary—since Jesus is already risen from the dead!

Paul is presenting two doctrines—most difficult for the observant Jew to accept—the Incarnation of Christ and the Resurrection of Christ—both must be accepted—believed—trusted.

Does the gospel ask men to do that which is humanly impossible or do that which has already been done by the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is no. So then what does it say?

8But 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):

The word is “rhema” and has the definite article! THE WORD and THE WORD OF THE FAITH. This faith rejects and refuses human effort (v.6; ‘say not in thine heart’). This is the kind of faith that is personal—a personal faith in the word (message) of God.

Again Paul adapts the verse from Deuteronomy 30:14 to say that the gospel is near, accessible intelligible and obtainable! The gospel is available to everyone! Salvation to all is offered to all! Paul makes it clear that salvation is not hidden or secret or exclusive. Everyone can be saved.

Why is this important? For some who come to the conclusion that only a special group can be saved; that a select group has been chosen for salvation and another group rejected for no reason—Paul argues that people are responsible for the choice to accept God’s gift of love and mercy and salvation. The gospel can be expressed in normal familiar everyday speech (the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart). It can be easily and readily understood (and in your heart). Faith does not cause the incarnation or the resurrection! The incarnation and the resurrection is a part of the proclamation—it has occurred—the gospel is deeply rooted in a historical event! It requires our response (v.9); an outward confession and an inward conviction!

The Reception Of God’s Righteousness (vv.9-10)

9that 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.

This is the gospel in a nutshell—in miniature. The offer is given; the invitation extended. But how can the offer be accepted? How can God’s offer of salvation be received? Paul makes it crystal clear! Confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and you will be saved.

The responsibility for salvation rests on each and every individual. No one can do it for you. You must come to faith alone.
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You accept the truth that Jesus came in his incarnation; born of a virgin; born a real human being. There is a reason Paul calls Jesus “LORD”. Jesus is Jehovah. Second you must believe the truth about His death and resurrection. God raised Jesus from the dead as proof that the Lord Jesus has completed the work necessary for our salvation, and that God is completely satisfied with Christ’s finished work. When you believe with your heart you are believing with the sum and substance of all your mental and emotional and volitional powers!

The deaf may hear the Savior’s voice,
The fettered tongue its chains may break;
But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
The laggard soul that will not wake,
the guilt that scorns to be forgiven—
These baffle e’en the spells of heaven.

John Keble

10For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

There is no such thing as a saving faith that does not include accepting and acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Bible gives no encouragement for those who accept Jesus with mental reservations about Christ’s death and resurrection. For the person who says; “I will accept Jesus as Savior but not as Lord.

Do we make submission to Jesus as Lord a condition of salvation?

William MacDonald points out that few Christians claim to have made an absolute or complete surrender to Christ! We believe faith is the sole condition of justification. Salvation comes through a cross and and a crucified Christ.

The Scope Of God’s Righteousness (vv.11-13)

11For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

Where does the Scripture say this? Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16.

Paul knew that the thought of public confession might generate fear. For some a public identification with Christ might arouse suspicion or ridicule or a change in friendship or relationship. Jesus spoke of this in Marks gospel (8:38); “Whosever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His father with the holy angels.”

Paul knows that public confession on the earth will result in public confession in heaven.
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Paul has already admitted (1:16); “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Paul uses the term “whoever” to describe the scope of salvation but also to provide a link for the verse that follows; salvation if for all.

The offer is available to all as a free gift.  
The offer and invitation brings with it an opportunity to accept or decline the offer.  
Whoever accepts the offer (believes on Him) will not be put to shame!  
And whoever accepts or embraces this gospel will be saved!

12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

What is the relationship of Jew and Gentile?  No distinction!  There is no difference!  In what sense?  All riches (benefits) come from the Lord.  God is rich towards all who call upon Him.

13For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Paul offers Joel 2:32 as Biblical evidence that all can call upon the name of the Lord and embrace redemption and salvation.

The name of the Lord stands for the Lord Himself and all that the name incorporates.  
Salvation is available to anyone (whosoever)  
We are accepted when we call on the name of the LORD  
It is absolute in its promise “shall be saved” not might be saved or stands a chance at being saved.

Conclusion

Paul began the chapter with a plea and a prayer: “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” We are given both reasons and rights to pray for our loved ones.  We can and should pray for our family.  Paul also challenges the non-Christian.  We each are responsible before God to accept the free gift of salvation.  And Paul then fills our hearts with hope as we discover that the Lord alone is responsible to save who ever comes to Him through Christ and faith alone.

Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote; “Anyone can devise a plan by which good people go to heaven.  Only God can devise a plan whereby sinners, which are His enemies, can go to heaven.”

Martin Lloyd Jones said, “Christians are not men and women who are hoping for salvation, but those who experience it.”
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Luis Palau

“Only in Jesus Christ do we have assurance of salvation, forgiveness of sins, entrance into God’s family, and the guarantee of heaven when we die.”

In the 1950’s Ralph Carmichael wrote this great hymn;

    The Savior is waiting to enter your heart.
    Why don’t you let Him come in?
    There’s nothing in this world to keep you apart.
    What is your answer to Him?

    If you’ll take one step t’ward the Savior, my friend,
    You’ll find His arms open wide.
    Receive Him and all of your darkness will end.
    Within your heart He’ll abide.

Chorus:
    Time after time He has waited before
    And now He is waiting again
    To see if you’re willing to open the door.
    Oh, how He wants to come in!