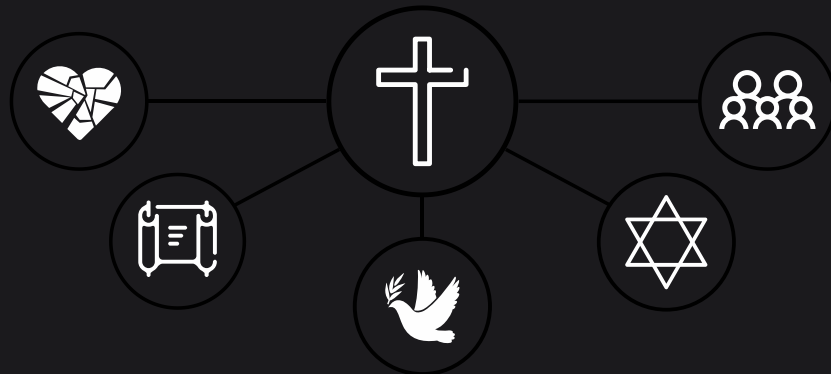


ROMANS AND THE FUTURE GOSPEL



Title: Without Excuse

Text: Romans 10:14-21

Date: May 7, 2023

Main Idea: Israel's present rejection and unbelief leads to the Gentiles future reality and saving belief.

Group Study Guide

*This lesson is for the Group Leader to use to teach the lesson and facilitate the discussion. It is not intended that you will use every question in this guide during your group time. You will likely only be able to cover 4-5 questions, depending on how discussion goes. This guide is longer than what you will

need but provides the freedom and flexibility to pull questions out for discussion that will best serve your group time.

Discussion-Based Tip: You may want to pull one question from each section for discussion or spend more time on a particular section than another on. It's totally up to your discretion.

Lecture Tip: If your style is largely lecture style, you can use the headings and questions to make your main points for the text. Then as you teach, you could follow-up with application and apply questions sprinkled into the explanation of the text in your teaching. The answers are provided below.

There is also additional space after each section if you print the lessons and take notes.

Introduction

Icebreaker Question:

Have you ever shared your faith with another person? If so, what happened? If not, what is the biggest barrier that keeps people from sharing their faith? (This could be a good time to update on an outreach opportunities for the class.)

TIP: You may want to begin by sharing how you came to faith or may want to have someone in the class share their faith journey.

READ ROMANS 10:14-21

The next three chapter (9-11) are all about Israel. Remember, this is written to Jews and Gentiles. It's written to the church in Rome, that is filled with both Jews and Gentiles, so the question of Israel is an important and big one. In these next 3 chapters, Paul is answering the question "so what about the Jews?"

Highlight – What stands out?

1. **Rewind:** What do verses 14-15 have to do with verse 13? In other words, how are they related?

Paul has just said there is no distinction between Jews and Greeks. They are saved the exact same way—by faith. Now he is telling them the process by which Jews and Greeks hear and believe. First he establishes that salvation has always been the same from the beginning until now. And now he shifts to the process.

2. Paul uses rhetorical questions to highlight the Importance of proclaiming the gospel of Christ to the lost. What call does he give to his fellow believers at this point (see Romans 10:14-15)?

The call is for them to participate in sharing the gospel. We're responsible to "go and tell."

Moo states that Paul asks rhetorical questions and then makes clear that every condition, except one, has been met. Preached, heard, understood, but not believed.¹

3. The quotation in Romans 10:15 is found in Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15. Read these references in context as a class. How do they compare to the Romans reference? What does the phrase "beautiful feet" refer to in each of these passages?

Isaiah is in the context of the Lord's salvation. It's part of the promise that God will save his people. Nahum is in the context of Nineveh being judged and dealt with. The beautiful feet are the ones who bring the promise of God's salvation and deliverance.

4. In Romans 10:16, 18, 19 and 21, each begins with the conjunction "But". Explain how each of these verses contrasts with what precedes. Is there anything we can learn about God's character in these verses?

Romans 10:16 – Israel has not all obeyed.

Romans 10:18 – They have all heard this gospel.

Romans 10:19 – Israel had opportunity to understand.

Romans 10:21 – God has given his heart to them and they reject him,

God has continually been patient with them, yet they reject him. He gave them ample opportunity to believe, but they missed it.

5. Where do faith and hearing the gospel originate (see Romans 10:17)?
It comes from the word of Christ.

¹ Moo, Epistle to the Romans, New International Commentary on the New Testament, 1996.

6. How did Paul answer the argument that the Jews have not had adequate opportunity to hear God's message? (See Romans 10:18-21).

Moo states that Israel cannot plead ignorance; God made his purposes clear in both the OT and worldwide proclamation of gospel. There are 6 OT quotations in verses 14-21.²

7. What was God's approach with Israel (see Romans 10:19)? According to the rest of this passage, were they responsive to God?

He makes them jealous by going to the nations. He uses other nations faith to make them jealous.

8. How does God describe His chosen people who have refused Christ (Romans 10:21)?

A disobedient and contrary people.

² Ibid.

Explain – What does this mean?

1. What is the connection between “hearing” and “obedience” with regard to salvation? (See also Romans 1:5)

True saving faith leads to obedience. It's the message of the parable of the soils in Matthew 13. It's the message of Psalm 1. It's the message of Jesus' teaching in John 14-17. If we abide we will hear fruit.

2. What does Paul encourage Christians to do with his questions (Romans 10:14-15)?

He expects them to follow his line of thinking and to act. There is a strong call to act in evangelism in this text.

3. In Romans 10:15, Paul quotes Isaiah, what is the significance of the quotation in this context? Why are the feet of the messenger described as “beautiful”? (see also 2 Samuel 18:24-27)

They are beautiful because they bring the promise of salvation. They bring the hope of new life in Christ.

4. Paul quotes from both Psalm 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:21. How do these passages help answer the question as to whether Israel had heard the gospel (see also Romans 10:18-19)?

Although some can claim ignorance of the gospel, the nation of Israel cannot. Israel had access to the knowledge of God's righteousness available through the gospel, but they chose to pursue their own righteousness.³

5. Why do you suppose God would want to make Israel jealous? Do you believe God wants to push Israel away or bring the Jewish people closer to Him (see Romans 10:19)?

Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem and longed to gather His people back to Him. He willingly died for Jews and Gentiles alike. God is long-suffering and patient, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

³ Runge, Romans: A Visual and Textual Guide, p.182.

6. How does Romans 10:20 reveal God's grace? Is God dependent on our seeking Him or does God seek us?

Left to ourselves, we would not seek him. But he makes himself readily available and easy to find, to people who aren't seeking him. The beauty of the gospel is that he runs after us and reveals himself to us, even when we aren't looking for him.

7. Paul quotes Isaiah 65:1-2. What did God do after His people rejected the gospel? What is God continually attempting to do (see Romans 10:20-21)?

What will happen, then, when God acts through the Messiah to fulfill his original intention even though Israel itself clings to its own misinterpretation of the promises and, like the older brother in Jesus' parable, stays away from the party? Israel will be jealous, because (as Paul said in 9.30–31) Gentiles will be inheriting the promises while Israel, the promise-bearers, are missing out on them. As we shall see, Paul will use it as the lever to bring about the good news still to come.⁴

Israel is not some untouched people group; they have simply not recognized the Old Testament prophecies anticipating the Messiah.⁵

8. What Image of God is portrayed toward his wayward people in verse 21? In what way does this show God's heart for people who reject Him?

God deliberately reverses the roles between himself and the Gentiles. It would normally be for them to ask, seek, and knock (as Jesus was later to put it) and to adopt toward him the respectful attitude of a servant at his master's disposal, saying, "Here I am." Instead, although they did not ask or seek or offer themselves to his service, he allowed himself to be found by them, he revealed himself to them, and he even offered himself to them, saying humbly to them, "Here am I." This is dramatic imagery for grace, God taking the initiative to make himself known: "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people" (Isaiah 65:2).⁶

⁴ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part Two, Chapters 9-16*.

⁵ Runge, *Romans: A Visual and Textual Guide*, p.182.

⁶ Stott, *Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power*.

Apply – How does this change me?

Only God can plan for weeks of texts on evangelism right after a tragedy hits our city. Only God can plan for weeks of texts on evangelism after Dr. Smith has been burdened for evangelism in our Groups for the last few months. This is a reminder that the Bible is true and living and active. God is the one who speaks through his word. We are just his vessels who receive and teach the word. These application questions will be heavy evangelism focused because “going and telling” is the main point of this text.

These answers are intended to be personal application, so the answers vary.

1. What do you believe it means to “hear” the message? Do you believe that all people hear the message when it’s spoken to them? Why/Why not? (see Romans 10:14-17 and Matthew 13:1-23)?

2. How does Romans 10:16-17 help you understand how to respond to someone who is not obeying the gospel? How do these verses help you interpret a person's response to the gospel once you have preached it and they hear it?

3. Israel struggled to believe that salvation came through faith, not through perfectly adhering to the law and traditions. This ultimately made some stumble over the gospel and ultimately reject it. How do you stumble over salvation through faith versus works?

4. Read Romans 10:18. Should the Israelites have heard the message? Do you know anyone who has heard the message but hasn't really listened? Why?

5. How do you feel about God's sending of the gospel to the Gentiles as a means of provoking the Jews to jealousy? What does this tell you about the "mysterious ways" God often works in order to enact His plan for the world?

Respond – What's my next step?

1. **Outreach Follow-up:** Spend some time preparing with your Outreach Leader to follow-up with your class on how your calls are going or conversations are going with the people you are reaching out to.
2. **Group Response:** On a scale of 1-10 (1= closed off about your faith; 10= open to sharing your faith with others), where are you In terms of sharing your faith? Where would you like to be on this scale? What obstacle needs to be overcome?
3. **Group Response:** What are some ways the gospel is made known to the lost? What do you believe is the most effective approach?
4. **Personal Response:** Is there someone in your life or circle with whom God might want you to share your faith? If so, what steps could you take this week to begin this process? (Download the Life on Mission App In the App Store to help you share the 3 circles)⁷
5. **Personal Response to send home with your class:** Write out or type a prayer to the Lord for a lost family member or friend. No matter where they stand amidst the gospel, pray that God would call the person and use you to draw them near to His salvation.

⁷ Life on Mission, North American Mission Board, <https://www.namb.net/evangelism/life-on-mission-app/>.

Commentary: Romans 10:14-21 by John Stott

Note to Group Leaders: You also have your F.F. Bruce Commentary on Romans you were given on Team Night. You can use that one, in addition to this one, to help you grasp the text. Reach out to Courtney Reissig if you need one or haven't received yours.

3. The necessity of evangelism (14–15)

In order to demonstrate the indispensable necessity of evangelism, Paul asks four consecutive questions.

First, if, in order to be saved, sinners must call on the name of the Lord (13), *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?* (14a). For calling on his name presupposes that they know and believe his name (*i.e.* that he died, was raised and is Lord). This is the only occasion in his letters on which

Paul uses the term 'believe in (*eis*)', which is the regular expression in John's writings for saving faith. Here, however, since saving faith is presented as 'calling on' Christ's name, the kind of 'belief' Paul has in mind must be the prior stage of believing the facts about Jesus which are included in his 'name'.

Secondly, *how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?* (14b). Just as believing is logically prior to calling, so hearing is logically prior to believing. What kind of hearing, however? 'In accordance with normal grammatical usage', the phrase *the one of whom (hou)* should be translated 'the one whom' and so means 'the speaker rather than the message'.²² In other words, they will not believe Christ until they have heard him speaking through his messengers or ambassadors.²³

Thirdly, *how can they hear without someone preaching (kēryssō, to 'herald') to them?* (14c). In ancient times, before the development of the mass media of communication, the role of the herald was vital. The major means of transmitting news was his public proclamations in the city square or the marketplace. There could be no hearers without heralds.

Fourthly, *how can they preach unless they are sent?* (15a). It is not clear from the text what kind of 'sending' Paul has in mind. Because he uses the verb *apostellō*, commentators have tended to assume that he has himself in mind as an apostle (see 1:1, 5; 11:13),²⁴ together with his fellow apostles, for they had been directly commissioned by Christ.²⁵ There were also 'apostles of the churches', however, sent out as missionaries.²⁶ The latter is a broader concept, for, although the apostles of Christ were appointed by him and required no endorsement by the church, the churches sent out only those whom Christ had chosen to send.²⁷ The need for heralds is now confirmed from Scripture: *As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'* (15b).²⁸ If those who proclaimed the good news of release from Babylonian exile were thus celebrated, how much more welcome the heralds of the gospel of Christ should be!

The essence of Paul's argument is seen if we put his six verbs in the opposite order: Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved. And the relentless logic of Paul's case for evangelism is felt most forcibly when the stages are stated negatively and each is seen to be essential to the next. Thus, unless some people are commissioned for the task, there will be no gospel preachers; unless the gospel is preached, sinners will not hear Christ's message and voice; unless they hear him, they will not believe the truths of his death and resurrection; unless they

²² Dunn, vol. 38B, p. 620.

²³ Cf. 2 Cor. 5:20; 13:3.

²⁴ Cf. Gal. 1:15f.

²⁵ E.g. Lk. 6:12f.; Gal. 1:1.

²⁶ 2 Cor. 8:23.

²⁷ E.g. Acts 13:1ff.

²⁸ Cf. Is. 52:7.

believe these truths, they will not call on him; and unless they call on his name, they will not be saved. Since Paul began this chapter by expressing his longing that the Israelites will be saved (1), he must surely have had them specially in mind when developing his evangelistic strategy in these verses. His next paragraph confirms this.

4. The reason for Israel's unbelief (16–21)

If evangelism is made up of a series of successive stages, beginning with heralds being sent and ending with sinners being saved, how is the unbelief of Israel to be explained? For *not all the Israelites accepted the good news* (16a)—a surprising understatement in view of what he has written earlier about ‘only the remnant’ (9:27). It is partly for this reason that some understand these verses as relating to Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. But NIV is surely right (as in verse 1) to supply the word ‘Israelites’, which is missing from the Greek sentence. The whole section is about the Jewish response—or rather non-response—to the gospel. Their unbelief, Paul now shows, was foretold by Isaiah in his rhetorical question: ‘*Lord, who has believed our message?*’ (16b).²⁹ Yet they should have believed. Verse 17 reverts to the argument of verse 14, although it reduces the five stages to only three; *faith comes from hearing* (NEB ‘is awakened by’) *the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ*, that is, ‘the word of which Christ is both content and author’.³⁰ Thus preaching leads to hearing, and hearing to believing. Why then have the Israelites not believed? In answer to this perplexing question Paul ventilates and rejects two possible explanations (18–19), and then supplies his own explanation (20–21).

First, *did they not hear?* This is the right first question to ask, since believing depends on hearing. But Paul no sooner asks the question than he summarily dismisses it: *Of course they did* (18a). As evidence of this assertion he quotes Psalm 19:4:

^{18b}*‘Their voice has gone out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.’*

Paul’s choice of biblical quotation is surprising, since what Psalm 19 celebrates is not the worldwide spread of the gospel, but the universal witness of the heavens to their Creator. Paul of course knew this perfectly well. It is entirely gratuitous to conclude that he misremembered, misunderstood or misrepresented his text. It seems perfectly reasonable instead to suggest that he was transferring eloquent biblical language about global witness from the

NIV The New International Version of the Bible (1973, 1978, 1984).

²⁹ Cf. Is. 53:1.

NEB The New English Bible (NT, 1961, second edition 1970; OT, 1970).

³⁰ Dunn, vol. 38B, p. 623.

creation to the church, taking the former as symbolic of the latter. If God wants the general revelation of his glory to be universal, how much more must he want the special revelation of his grace to be universal too!

But is it true that the gospel has *gone out into all the earth and to the ends of the world*? As an understandable hyperbole I think it is, just as Paul was to say later to the Colossians that the gospel 'has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven', so that in consequence 'all over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing'.³¹ Since Paul is here alluding to the spread of the good news in Jewry, however, it may be better to understand Paul's claim as what F. F. Bruce has called 'representative universalism', meaning that 'wherever there were Jews', and in particular wherever a Jewish community existed, 'there the gospel had been preached'.³² So the Jews *have* heard; they cannot blame their not believing on their not hearing.

Secondly, then, *Did Israel not understand?* (19a). For we take Paul's point that it is quite possible to hear without understanding, as Jesus warned us in his parable of the sower.³³ But no, Paul also rejects this explanation of Jewish unbelief, and backs up his position by quoting from Moses *first*. Perhaps he means that he will then quote Isaiah second (20), so that the law and the prophets constitute two witnesses. The Mosaic verse he appeals to is this:

*^{19b}'I will make you envious by those who are not a nation;
I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding'.³⁴*

This text indicates that there are people with 'no understanding'. But they are not the Jews; they are the Gentiles, whom Moses also describes as 'not a nation', reminding us of God's word to Hosea which Paul has earlier applied to the Gentiles, namely that they were 'not my people' (9:25f.).³⁵ God reveals his intention to make Israel both 'envious' of and 'angry' at the 'no-nation', 'no understanding' Gentiles because of the blessings he would give them.

If, then, Israel's rejection of the gospel cannot be attributed either to her not hearing it or to her not understanding it, she must be without excuse. This is the third possible explanation of her unbelief, which Paul now accepts. Israel is simply stubborn. True, the Israelites were ignorant of God's righteousness (3), but this is now seen to be wilful ignorance. They had 'stumbled over the "stumbling-stone"', namely Christ (9:32).

In order to enforce this, Paul now quotes what *Isaiah boldly says*. The prophet's 'bold' words are those recorded in Isaiah 65:1f.; they prove to come from the lips of Yahweh himself. In these two verses he draws a sharp contrast

³¹ Col. 1:23, 26.

³² Bruce, p. 194.

³³ Mt. 13:19.

³⁴ Cf. Dt. 32:21.

³⁵ Ho. 1:9f.; 2:23.

between the Gentiles and the Jews, his actions towards them and their attitudes towards him. Take the Gentiles first:

*²⁰I was found by those who did not seek me;
I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me'.³⁶*

Paul could have added the third clause of Isaiah 65:1:

*'To a nation that did not call on my name,
I said, "Here am I, here am I."'*

Taken together, the three clauses complete the picture. God deliberately reverses the roles between himself and the Gentiles. It would normally be for them to ask, seek and knock (as Jesus was later to put it), and to adopt towards him the respectful attitude of a servant at his master's disposal, saying, 'Here I am.' Instead, although they did not ask or seek or offer themselves to his service, he allowed himself to be found by them, he revealed himself to them, and he even offered himself to them, saying humbly to them, 'Here am I.' This is dramatic imagery for grace, God taking the initiative to make himself known.

*²¹But concerning Israel he says,
'All day long I have held out my hands
to a disobedient and obstinate people.'³⁷*

God's initiative to Israel is even more pronounced. He does not simply allow himself to be found; he actively holds out his hands to them. Like a parent inviting a child to come home, offering a hug and a kiss, and promising a welcome, so God has opened and stretched out his arms to his people, and has kept them continuously outstretched, *all day long*, pleading with them to return. But he has received no response. They do not even give him the neutral response of the Gentiles, who decline either to ask or to seek. No, their response is negative, resistant, recalcitrant, dismissive. They are determined to remain *a disobedient and obstinate people*. We feel God's dismay, his grief.

So Paul concludes his second exploration into the unbelief of Israel. In chapter 9 he attributed it to God's purpose of election, on account of which many were passed by, and only a remnant was left, an Israel within Israel. In chapter 10, however, he attributes it to Israel's own disobedience. Their fall was their fault. The antinomy between divine sovereignty and human responsibility remains.

One of the notable features of Romans 10 is that it is saturated with Old Testament allusion and quotation. Paul cites Scripture here in order to confirm or illustrate eight truths: first, the ready accessibility of Christ to faith (6–8 = Dt. 30:12ff.); second, the promise of salvation to all who believe (11 = Is. 28:16; 13 = Joel

³⁶ Is. 65:1.

³⁷ Is. 65:2.

2:32); third, the glorious necessity of evangelism (15 = Is. 52:7); fourth, the unresponsiveness of Israel (16 = Is. 53:1); fifth, the universality of the gospel (18 = Ps. 19:4); sixth, the Gentiles' provocation of Israel (19 = Dt. 32:21); seventh, the divine initiative of grace (20 = Is. 65:1); and eighth, the patient grief of God the evangelist (21 = Is. 65:2). Thus Paul's emphasis is not only on the authority of Scripture, but also on the fundamental continuity which unites the Old and the New Testament revelations.⁸

Additional Resources:

Podcast: Salvation, Reverse Engineered by Skip Heitzig, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmbxUGT2nf0>.

Commentary: Romans, F.F. Bruce

Commentary: *Romans*, N.T. Wright

Commentary: *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Colin Kruse

Commentary: *NICNT, The Epistle to the Romans*, Douglas Moo

Book: *Romans: A Visual and Textual Guide*, Steven E. Runge

Book: *Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power*, John Stott

Book: *The Wiersbe Bible Study Series: Romans: How to Be Right with God, Yourself, and Others* by Warren W. Wiersbe.

Book: *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part Two: Chapters 9-16*, N.T. Wright

⁸ John R. W. Stott, [*The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*](#), *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 285–290.

APP: [*Life on Mission app, North American Mission Board. Apple and Google App Store.*](#)

Course Curriculum: [Romans 10:14-21 by Michael Kruger](#)

Video: [Romans 10:14-21 by Michael Kruger](#)