Romans 9:30–10:3, 9–17 Study Guide

Paul has spent Romans showing that righteousness cannot be earned through human effort; it is received through faith in Christ (Romans 3:21–28; 4:4–5; 5:1). In this passage, he applies that truth particularly to Israel: many sincerely pursued righteousness, but they pursued it through works rather than faith and therefore stumbled over Christ (Romans 9:30–33).

The passage moves through three related ideas: **misplaced faith, saving faith, and sharing the faith**. Trusting our own righteousness fails; salvation is received through faith in Christ; and those who have heard the gospel are then responsible to help others hear.

1. Why did the Gentiles attain righteousness while many in Israel did not? (Romans 9:30–33)

Paul says the Gentiles received "the righteousness of faith," while Israel pursued righteousness "as though it were by the works of the law" (Romans 9:30–32). The problem was not that Israel cared too much about righteousness; it was **where they placed their confidence**.

Christ became a "stumbling stone" because receiving righteousness by faith requires admitting that our own righteousness is insufficient (Romans 9:32–33; Isaiah 28:16). Paul had personally known this kind of confidence in religious achievement before counting it loss for Christ (Philippians 3:4–9).

Everyday Application: We can be sincere, disciplined, and religious while trusting the wrong thing. The question is not only, "Am I trying to live well?" but **"What am I trusting to make me right with God?"**

2. What does Paul's prayer for Israel teach us about how we should view people who reject the gospel? (Romans 10:1)

Paul has just described Israel's unbelief, yet he does not respond with contempt. He says his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (Romans 10:1).

This echoes his anguish in Romans 9:2–3. Truth about unbelief did not make Paul cold toward unbelievers; it deepened his concern for them.

Everyday Application: When someone rejects Christ, our response should not be superiority or frustration. It should be love, prayer, and a genuine desire that they come to know Him.

3. How can someone have "zeal for God" and still be wrong? (Romans 10:2–3)

Paul says Israel had "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2). The problem was not their seriousness or devotion; it was that their zeal was disconnected from the truth God had revealed in Christ.

Paul understood this personally. Before encountering Christ, he was exceedingly zealous for his religious traditions and persecuted the church, believing he was defending God's truth (Acts 22:3–

4; Galatians 1:13–14). Jesus warned that people could even persecute His followers while believing they were offering service to God (John 16:2).

This is a broader warning about religious conviction. People across many religions can demonstrate extraordinary sincerity, discipline, sacrifice, and zeal. But sincerity does not make a belief true. Zeal strengthens whatever direction it is pointed—truth or error.

Israel's central error was "seeking to establish their own righteousness" rather than submitting to the righteousness God provides (Romans 10:3; 3:20–22).

Everyday Application: Strong conviction is not the same as truth. We should not ask only, "How strongly do I believe this?" but also, "Is what I believe actually consistent with what God has revealed?"

4. What does it mean to believe in your heart and confess Jesus as Lord? (Romans 10:9–10)

Paul says salvation involves believing in the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confessing Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9–10).

These are not two separate ways of being saved. The mouth expresses what the heart truly believes. Confessing "Jesus is Lord" is more than repeating words; it recognizes who Jesus is and where our allegiance belongs. Jesus similarly warns that merely saying "Lord, Lord" without genuine relationship and obedience is insufficient (Matthew 7:21).

Paul's emphasis remains consistent with Romans: righteousness is received by faith rather than earned by works (Romans 4:4–5).

Everyday Application: Christian faith is neither silent intellectual agreement nor empty religious speech. What we genuinely believe about Christ should increasingly be reflected in what we confess and how we live.

5. What does "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" teach about the reach of the gospel? (Romans 10:11–13)

Paul emphasizes the openness of the gospel invitation. There is "no distinction between Jew and Greek," because the same Lord is rich toward "all who call upon Him" (Romans 10:12). Paul then quotes Joel 2:32: "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

This fits Romans 1:16, where the gospel is God's power to salvation "for everyone who believes." God does not offer one means of salvation to one group and another means to someone else. All come through faith in Christ.

Everyday Application: We should never decide beforehand that someone is too far away, too different, or too hardened to hear the gospel. The invitation is genuinely extended to whoever will call upon the Lord.

6. What chain of events does Paul describe between hearing the gospel and calling on Christ? (Romans 10:14)

Paul asks a series of questions:

How can they **call** if they have not **believed**?
How can they **believe** if they have not **heard**?
How can they **hear** without someone proclaiming the message? (Romans 10:14)

God saves, but He ordinarily uses the proclamation of the gospel as the means through which people hear and believe. Paul himself was sent to carry Christ's name to others (Acts 9:15).

Everyday Application: We cannot make another person believe, but we can help make sure they have the opportunity to hear.

7. Who is responsible for helping others hear the good news? (Romans 10:15)

Paul asks, "How shall they preach unless they are sent?" and then quotes Isaiah: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace" (Romans 10:15; Isaiah 52:7).

In this passage, Paul is speaking about those who are sent to proclaim the gospel. Some believers are specifically called and sent as pastors, missionaries, or evangelists (Acts 13:2–3; Ephesians 4:11). But the responsibility to bear witness to Christ is not limited to professional ministry. Jesus commissioned His followers to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19–20), and believers are called to be ready to speak about the hope they have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

So while not every believer is called to be a preacher in the formal sense, every believer has a part in making Christ known.

Everyday Application: Someone helped us hear the gospel. Every believer should ask, "Who in my life might hear about Christ because I was willing to speak?"

8. If hearing the gospel is necessary, why do some who hear still not believe? (Romans 10:16–17)

Paul is realistic: "They have not all obeyed the gospel" (Romans 10:16). Hearing does not guarantee belief. Isaiah had already asked, "Lord, who has believed our report?" (Isaiah 53:1).

Yet Paul immediately says:

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." –Romans 10:17 NKJV

Our responsibility is not to control another person's response. It is to faithfully make Christ known. The gospel must be heard before it can be believed, and we do not know in advance who will respond.

Everyday Application: Do not decide for someone else that they will not believe. Share faithfully and leave the response with them and with God.