

Romans 10:14-21

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Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

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The Rejection of Righteousness

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

I don't think there is anything as bad as when you try to express your love to somebody and they reject it. You love somebody dearly and are doing everything you can think of to express that love to that person and that person just turns their back on you and rejects everything you are trying to do to show your love. You know we have been looking at righteousness by faith. We know that righteousness only comes by faith.

TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

We have seen the contrast of the two kinds of righteousness. There is the true kind that comes by faith in Christ. There is the other kind that man works up for himself. He thinks arrogantly that he can attain that. Sadly enough that is what Israel went after. Then we saw the accessibility of righteousness. Paul even used Moses, over in the book of Deuteronomy to show how clear, how accessible God has made His word to them and to us. Then we saw the invitation to righteousness.

Now we turn to the saddest message of all because you are going to see the rejection of that righteousness. What we have to understand is that Israel was not in any way a nation that did not know that righteousness was by faith. We are going to see that in the Word. They knew it. They heard it. God loved Israel. God pursued them and through their prophet spoke of them and tried to communicate to them. They saw it. They heard it. But they rejected it. How often I want to point my finger at Israel. But I want to tell

you something, folks, they are a picture of all of us when we look at our flesh.

How many times has God, out of His love, tried to speak to you in your life? Think about it. What did He bring into your life? Who did He bring into your life? How did God try to get a message of love across to you? But you didn't listen and you rejected that love. Boy, what a long-suffering God we have. He continues to try to show His love in our life. He did with Israel, but Israel rejected that love.

You know, in being grateful for what God has done, we realize that God not only orchestrated salvation, but He also ordained the way in which it would come about. We need to go back to Romans 10:14. This is the way it comes about. He says, "How then shall they call upon Him [out of desperation] in whom they have not believed?" That is the first question. How can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? Secondly, he asks the question, "And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" Thirdly he asks, "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" You have to hear to believe. You have to believe to call upon Him. That is how salvation takes place. There is no other way. I wish there was sometimes, but there is no other way than to hear what the Word of God has to say about salvation by grace and grace alone. Righteousness is by faith.

In verse 15 of Romans 10 it says, "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written [and here is the response of those who hear], 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!'" People must hear in order to believe and in order to call.

I want to go back to that one thought because I am going to use it as a springboard. We have got to do whatever it takes to make sure people get the opportunity to hear. You see, we must go, we must send and we must give. You have heard that over and over and over again. God says that is the only way people are going to get saved. They have to hear in order to believe and in order to call. To be able to hear you have to have somebody to share, and to be able to share somebody has to be sent. That is the way it works. God ordained it that way. There is no other way for a person to come to know that righteousness is by faith.

Well, the reason I am bringing this up is the question may be, "Has Israel ever heard?" Maybe this would explain why they pursued righteousness by their own works. Maybe they just didn't know. Maybe somehow they had not heard. Maybe this is why they acted so stubborn and rebellious. What we are going to see is, oh yes, they heard and they understood, but they chose to reject what they heard and understood.

Three things I am going to look at:
ISRAEL IS NOT INNOCENT
ISRAEL IS NOT IGNORANT
ISRAEL IS ARROGANT

There are three things I am going to look at.

First of all, Israel is not innocent. When you think of Israel as a nation and you realize they have rejected the message, remember they are not innocent in this. They are very guilty. They know what this message is. Look at Romans 10 beginning with verse 16: "However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. [Some translations say "by the word of God."] But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.'"

Paul is saying they have heard. The fact that Paul is speaking in verse 16 only of Jews is, to me, without question. Now some scholars have said, "No, he is referring to the Gentiles." I don't see how that could be. He is quoting Isaiah who is speaking of his own people. He had that in his mind since the first part of chapter 9. The guilt of Israel is so great and their refusal to respond to the good news is so unreasonable. Why? Because they have literally rejected the good tidings, the glad tidings of God Himself. Here is a God, a compassionate God, loving these people, and He has tried to get His message to them. He has sent it through His prophets. But these people will not respond. They have rejected that message. The message of righteousness by faith which came to the Jews by the word being spoken to them was refused by Israel as a nation. You see this message that says we must come as only poor, destitute sinners aroused the most violent opposition in the Jewish mind. They couldn't understand that. You see, they had worked so hard to get their standard of righteousness and put it above anything God required. They used their own standard to justify themselves.

Now the quote that Paul uses here in Romans 10:16 is from [Isaiah 53:1](#), that marvelous chapter that is so prophetic about the Lord Jesus Christ. The report concerns Christ and the gospel that Israel would reject. I think the reason he brings this up is to show you something. To say that Israel has rejected righteousness by faith only at a certain time period is not true. It has been the story about their history for as far back as you can go. Eight hundred years before, Isaiah himself complained about it. Stephen chided Israel in [Acts 7:51](#): "You men [talking about Israel] who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did." For generation after generation after generation, God had spoken to them very

clearly that righteousness is only by faith in Christ. This is why Abraham was reckoned as righteous. He believed in the same Christ we believe in. But Israel as a nation continued to reject that. They thought somehow they could earn it. They wanted their standard. They did not want God.

Look at Romans 10:16 again: "However, they did not all heed the glad tidings." The word **all** means all. They should have all heeded the glad tidings, but they didn't. Most of them did not. The word for **"heed"** is the **hupakouo**. That is a good word to remember. There are two words that are similar in meaning. One is **hupotasso**. That is a good word for wives to remember because that is the word for submitting to your husband. It does not mean that you are a doormat and it does not mean that your husband is some big boy and you are the little woman in the house. It means that both of you are equals, but because of God's order in your family and because you love Jesus like you love Him and because He submitted to His own Father, then you choose, as an equal, to put yourself under another equal and let him lead. It doesn't mean that you can't have times of talking and discussing this matter. There are times when his leadership might be in question. But you see the word **hupakouo** is a different word. That is the word for a child to the parent. Children don't like this word. It means to submit with no questions asked, totally bowing down and heeding to. It is the same word Jesus used to His Father of Himself, and it is the word used for Christians to God. It says that when they heard, they did not all heed, they didn't obey, they didn't willingly bow down. They didn't willingly submit as they should have.

The word for **"glad tidings"** is the word **gospel** or the word for good news. When the good news came to Israel, they did not all heed that good news. The good news is that righteousness is not by what you can do. Righteousness is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in what He did.

Then it goes on in verse 16, "for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'" I don't think that "our" is just an editorial "our." I think the "our" there is the prophets' report. Many of the prophets had prophesied of the Lord Jesus. Many of them had shared what He was going to have to do when He came to this earth. "Lord, who has believed our report?" The word "report" is all that the prophets had said to them. Remember back in verse 14 that hearing is the means by which a person can believe. Well, they had heard. Isaiah is saying, "Lord, who is going to believe what they have heard? We have told them. I have told them." If you want to use an editorial "our," then this is Isaiah. Isaiah said, "I have told them. Who is going to believe our report?" Israel was made to hear the gospel through the prophets, but they refused it.

Now this is a sad testimony. Here is God, a compassionate God, who is loving them, showing them that He loves them, telling them that righteousness is by faith, starting with Abraham, all the way back to Abraham. Their prophets have told them, but they have refused it. That is sad. Israel had not just rejected their own prophets, they had rejected God Himself. Now I want you to understand something. When the word of God speaks to your heart, you are not just rejecting what it says, you are rejecting what God is saying to you through His Word. That is what Israel had done.

Look at verse 17. I know you can do other things with this verse and there are many other applications to it, but to me here is the interpretation. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." There are two different texts. One says **"the word of God"** and one says **"the word of Christ."** Well, Christ is God. I don't have any trouble with that. It is God's word. But let's look at it. Paul is continuing his thought of verse 16. Israel was made to hear the message, but they did not respond in faith. When faith was there, faith was there. When you hear it, faith is there. He says, "So faith comes from hearing." Right out of the thing that one is made to hear comes this justifying faith. It was there. That is what Moses was saying. It is right here. It is in your mouth. It is in your heart. Listen to what you are hearing because there is the faith to believe it. Faith comes from hearing. The word **ek** means **out of**.

Then it says, "and hearing by the word of Christ." You see the message that Israel was made to hear is not man's message, it is God's message. Christ Himself, in the Old Testament, was speaking to the people whom He loved, and He speaks through His prophets. Man is the messenger sent to herald the message, but when it is spoken, it is Christ who speaks it to the heart which enables faith. Israel didn't just reject the message of their prophets, but they rejected the very message of Christ Himself. Then they reviled Him that God had sent to this earth.

I have always wondered about [Revelation 3:20](#). Jesus said, "'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.'" You know, any time the word is there and you are hearing it spoken, it is God speaking through that word to your heart. There comes the faith that opens the door. It is there already, but He enables that faith.

Israel had it in the prophets, folks. God had spoken it to them throughout the generations. They had it. Righteousness is by faith. But Israel as a nation said, "No, we don't want that." They were striving to establish their own system of righteousness by which they were going to justify themselves.

Well, in verse 18 of Romans 10, Paul reinforces the fact that Israel had heard. He says in verse 18, "But I say, surely they have never heard, have they?" Then he answers the question, "Indeed they have; 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their

words to the ends of the world." When Paul says, "surely they have never heard, have they" it could be said, "It certainly was not that they didn't get to hear, was it?" You can say it in a lot of ways. I mean, what he is saying and making very emphatic here is, "Israel heard. They knew. They clearly knew that righteousness was by faith." There is no doubt that Paul makes sure the point is made that Israel has very definitely heard.

Isaiah has been quoted again and again and here he is quoted again. Paul is trying to say that, not only the apostles preach it, but Isaiah and the other prophets also tried to tell them. From the very beginning there was not a single Jew who did not get the opportunity to hear either through the prophecies given through the prophets or later by witnessing the fulfillment of these prophecies in Christ Himself or through the apostles' teaching that righteousness comes by faith. There is no other way. From their prophets through their prophecies to the very fulfillment of Christ and Christ's own words and right on down through the apostles, they had heard. The gospel message of Christ was contained in the very scriptures that they read every Sabbath. From the very time that they were old enough to hear, from the time they were old enough to read, they heard these passages read and God was speaking through these passages. The prophets of old were trying to show them the message of salvation that righteousness only comes by faith in a man, Jesus Christ, the Messiah who would come.

Look at what Paul says in [Acts 13:14](#): "But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. [Now watch. He takes the whole history of Israel here.] And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, 'Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.' And Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, he said, 'Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:...'"

Paul gives the history of Israel, and then in [Acts 13:26-29](#) he addresses all the Israelites who were there: "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation is sent out. For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these [very things that they were hearing read] by condemning Him [Christ]. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. And when they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb." Right there Paul was saying, "Listen, you don't even understand what you are reading every Sabbath. But God has put it before you for generation after generation after generation. You have heard, you have heard, and you have heard. It is right there in front of you. There is not a one of you who has missed it. Not a one of you have missed it." He says that indeed they have heard.

Here is what I think Paul is talking about there. The Jews at the time Paul was writing this were scattered all over the world. I mean they were scattered because of persecution and every other thing. Everywhere they went, they took these prophecies with them. Therefore, wherever you would go, any synagogue, any place, you could find them being read somewhere in their scriptures. God had spoken it to them in His Word. He had spoken it to them through their prophets. And therefore, they had it with them wherever they would go. But they had chosen not to respond. They had rejected the very love that God was trying to extend to His own nation, Israel. Oh, yes. Israel had heard, but they had rejected what God had so graciously put before them. When it comes to hearing and you look at the nation of Israel, remember, they are not innocent. They are not innocent. God said it to them through their prophets all the way back.

Well, secondly not only are they not innocent, but Israel is not ignorant. Some people think, "Well, maybe they had heard but they just didn't know." Now be careful. We saw earlier in the passage of chapter 10 that they didn't have the fullness of knowledge, but be real careful, they had knowledge. Let me show you here. He says in verse 19, "But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, 'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you.' And Isaiah is very bold and says, 'I was found by those who sought Me not, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.'" They were not ignorant.

Let me kind of help you understand where I am going here. Israel was never ignorant of the fact that righteousness would be by faith. Never were they ignorant of that fact. The word "**know**" is the word **ginosko**, to have learned about something. They were told through the prophets. They were not innocent, they had been told. They were not ignorant, they understood. But since they were so stubborn and insisted upon their own system of works, they did not fully know. In other words, because they would not, they could not. They were blinded by their own self-righteousness. But their prophets had spoken to them down through history. They had it in front of them. The earlier word was **epignosis**. In Romans 10:2 it says, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." That word is **epignosis**. They had knowledge, **gnosis**, but they did not have **epignosis**. Their self-righteousness blinded them at some point, but God was very clear. God gave it to them on a platter and told them very clearly that righteousness is by faith alone. In fact, Moses prophesied from the very beginning that God would make Israel jealous by including those who were not a nation.

You see, there has never been a point that I can find in Israel's history that they have not been rebellious toward God. Now you can find certain ones that weren't. Thank God, He always had a remnant. We are going to see in [chapter 11](#) that Elijah came before the

Lord and said, "Lord, I am the only one not bowing my knee before Baal." And God said, "I have 7,000 who have not bowed their knees before Baal." God always kept for Himself a remnant, but when you look at the large nation of Israel, there has never been a time in their history that they have not been rebellious toward God. Yet, God in His long-suffering and kindness and goodness had put before them in their prophets and their prophecies right there righteousness by faith. It is all the way through. Even Isaiah prophesied that Christ would have to die for us so that they could have this righteousness that they wouldn't get any other way. So they had it in front of them. They were not innocent and they certainly were not ignorant.

It appears to me that what Paul is doing here by mentioning Moses and Isaiah is like taking the law and the prophets. Both of these bear witness to what Paul is saying here. First of all, he is quoting there about Moses from [Deuteronomy 32:21](#). I think there he is possibly referring to the church. He says there is going to be a people who are not a nation and they are going to make you jealous. He could be talking about the church and I will tell you why. Some people say he is simply talking about the Gentile people, but if you think about the church of Jesus Christ in the current century and you look at it real carefully, it is made up mostly of Gentiles. So when you think of the church, you don't think of the Jews who are in it that have come to know Christ, although they are there. You think of the Gentile world that is in it. It says over in [1 Peter 2:9](#), "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." That is exactly what Moses said. There is going to be a nation that He will raise up that is going to make you jealous. In other words, you have rejected everything God has put before you. So therefore, God is going to turn and make you jealous by allowing the Gentiles to come in. It is a parenthesis that is divine found in Daniel. It is a parenthesis that includes all the church, those who have come by faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore are made righteous in Him.

By a nation without understanding, he says, I will anger you. He quotes from Moses in order to say, "All the way back to Moses God said in your word that you have right in front of you that you are going to be this way, that you are not going to receive what He puts before you and that God is going to bring in another group of people who are going to make you jealous." We will look at that a lot in [chapter 11](#).

Then he goes on in verse 20 and quotes from Isaiah. "And Isaiah is very bold and says, 'I was found by those who sought Me not, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.'" What is he talking about here? He is quoting out of [Isaiah 65:1](#). "I permitted myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' to a nation which did not call on My name.'" To me, he is not talking about the Jews here because he has already referred earlier that the Gentiles never sought after Him but they attained it, talking about righteousness. God chose to allow Himself to be found by the Gentile world.

This is what I think Paul is talking about way back in chapter 9 when he talks about the fact that Israel pursued it but did not attain it. The Gentiles did not, but they attained it. The Gentiles were allowed in because of Israel's rejection of Christ. Israel was not innocent and is not today.

Israel is not ignorant. They had an understanding. They did have an understanding. All they have to do is look at their own scriptures and realize God has told them exactly what is going to happen to them. He told them through Moses. He told them through Isaiah, and all their prophets have told them that righteousness is by faith. Israel has never bought into that. They want their own standard of righteousness. Therefore, they are not innocent nor are they ignorant.

Verse 21 reads, "But as for Israel He says, 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'" Now he is quoting out of [Isaiah 65:2](#), which says, "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts." That is the way Israel was and has been since the very beginning. **They have never, as a nation, followed Him.** Thank God, all through history God has had a **remnant**. (click here for discussion of remnant) He had a remnant in Paul's day. He is going to have a remnant, I believe, in the end times because that is what [chapter 11](#) seems to allude to. But Israel, as a nation, is not innocent nor are they ignorant. **They are arrogant, folks.** They are disobedient and an obstinate people.

The word "**disobedient**" is **apeitheo**, unwilling to be persuaded by what God gave them in the scriptures. They were unwilling to be persuaded, to bow down, to obey what God had given them in the scriptures. And the word "**obstinate**" there is the word **antilego**, which means to speak against, to revile. Self-righteous Israel refused their own prophets and reviled the very Christ who they say has not even come yet today. They reviled Him and they refused to obey their own prophets.

Somebody said to me, "You are going to lose your Jewish audience." Romans 10 is Romans 10. I didn't write this, Paul wrote this. He is speaking to Israel. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are very clearly directed toward Israel, his kinsmen according to the flesh. They were a privileged people and yet proud people. If you start feeling sorry for Israel as a nation, you just remember something, they are not innocent and they are not ignorant. They chose not to bow to what God had clearly revealed to them through their prophets. In what the prophets had said was the ability to have faith. But they did not. They rejected what God had said.

APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE

That brings me to the closing of what I want to apply this to your life. Sometimes when we are in these types of scriptures, you wonder, "What does that have to do with me? I am a believer and I have bills to pay and I have problems with my kids. Thank you a lot for telling me about Israel. What does that have to do with me?" The more I thought about this, the more I began to realize how much truth Israel had. You think of the Gentile world, they had none of it. Israel had it all, folks, and rejected the very key of what everything centered around. Now think about it for a second. We now live in the 21st century and there is a whole lot of truth that is around. Is that not correct? I wonder how much has God tried to say to you and tried to say to me that we have become disobedient and obstinate to the very thing God has so precious spoken to us through His word.

Years ago, I was at a conference out in Texas. I remember going out of the last meeting so filled up with truth. We heard these marvelous speakers all day long and when you were finished, you just felt like you were just full to the brim. I couldn't wait to go back. We were going to the airport and I was telling my wife, "I don't even want to go home. This has been wonderful. No wonder Simon Peter said, 'Let's build a tabernacle up here and stay.' This is just too good." My wife brought me back to earth so fast! She said, "You know what? I am not going to any more of these conferences. I have so much truth in my head that I know I am not living. I am not sure I want any more until I start living what I know."

You know, if you think about what Israel had on their plate historically, they had it all right there in front of them. They tracked themselves back to Abraham. Jesus tried to say in [John 8](#), "If you were of Abraham, then you would love Me. You don't understand. You are not of Abraham, you are of your father the devil." Now that is amazing. They tracked it back to Abraham. If you track it back to Abraham, Abraham believed and it was accounted unto him as righteousness. Israel is not just Israel because they say they are physically descended from Abraham. Israel, God had in mind from the very beginning, was a people who by faith would believe Him. But they are not that. Think about what they had on their plate.

Now, think about what you have had on your plate. Let's think about it. You know, when you don't like my preaching and a lot of people don't, just turn on Christian radio. You will find somebody you like. I guarantee you. There are some good ones there. I know some people have told me, "I have listened to Christian radio all day long." I am thinking to myself, "Good night, with that much truth that ought to transform your life!" People can turn around that fast and become disobedient and obstinate at the drop of a hat. If you want to know what we are like in the flesh, folks, study Israel. God lovingly spoke to them through their prophets for century after century after century and they refused to listen to what God had to say. They were an obstinate and disobedient people.

I don't know about you but chapter 9 humbled me to the point that I don't ever want to do it again. I mean, it is just beyond me. It is over my head. I learned one thing out of it: I don't deserve my salvation. But what chapter 10 has done for me is to show me how much like Israel I can be at the drop of a hat. They would not respond when God lovingly set their table and gave it before them. Well, the rejection of this righteousness is a tough thing, a sad thing. For God to love people so much that He put it right in front of them and they would turn their back and reject what He had done.

Where are you in light of the truth that God has put on your plate? What has God spoken to you recently that you have not yet been willing to allow it to persuade you to bow before Him and to trust Him and to walk by faith in what He said?