

ROMANS 9-11

ROMANS 9:30-10:21 | WEEK 2: FEB 14, 2016

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 9:30-10:21

History of Salvation and Jewish-Gentile Relationships

Paul now connects the pattern of the startling mercy of God for Gentiles as well as Jews narrated and defended in 9:6-29 with its present manifestation in the arrival of the Messiah and in the gospel about the Messiah that is spreading throughout the world.

ISRAEL, THE NATIONS AND THE MESSIAH

Gentiles have obtained righteousness because it is by faith; Israel has not (9:30–33). Paul begins by noting the contrasting response to the Messiah among Gentiles and Jews.

In Romans 9:33, Paul brings together two passages from Isaiah. Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14.

Israel is zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge (10:2)

Their pursued a righteousness of their own, not God's righteousness (10:3). Paul restates his desire (now a prayer) for the salvation of his fellow Jews.

The means to God's righteousness is not the Law, for the Law points beyond itself to the Messiah, who is the "end" (*telos*) of the Law (10:4). The context suggests that Paul means that "end" here means both 'termination' and 'goal,' but with an emphasis on goal. Paul means something like 'the Messiah is the focal point of Scripture, the goal of the salvation history to which Scripture bears witness, and thus the God-given means of righteousness, not because it is abrogated, but because only the divine gift of the Messiah and his Spirit makes the fulfillment of the Law, and thus righteousness, possible (see 8:3-4). Righteousness is now available to "everyone who believes" (10:4).

FULFILLMENT OF THE COVENANT

Christ is the end of the law so that righteousness is for all who believe (10:5–13). Paul reaffirms the availability of the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike, and thus the necessity of its proclamation.

Deuteronomy 28, 29 and 30 tell a story of what is going to happen to Israel in days to come. Moses predicts that Israel will disobey and incur God's curses. Chapters 28 and 29 describe the worst of the curses as exile. But Deuteronomy 30 is the promise that God's covenant will come find them in exile. Jews still believed they were suffering the curses of Deut. 29, and many believed the promises of 30 would be fulfilled in their day. But it looked different depending on the person or group.

Because the covenant renewal of Deuteronomy 30 was to take place after exile (Deut. 30:1-5), Paul apparently reads the Deuteronomistic text in light of prophetic texts that speak of the postexilic salvation of the nations (Gentiles) as well as Israel. The explicit theological grounding of the universal availability of the gospel, however, is the oneness of the Lord (10:12)—that is, Jesus.

Paul applies *kyrios* (lord), the Greek Bible's title for YHWH, to Jesus (10:13, citing Joel 2:32). Additionally, in Paul's world 'Lord' was a title for Caesar. Saying that Jesus was Lord meant, ultimately, that Caesar was not.

CALL TO THE WORLD, AND FAILURE OF ISRAEL

Believing comes through hearing, but not all Israel accepted the gospel (10:14–21).

Paul returns briefly to the themes of contrasting Gentile and Jewish responses to the gospel and God's ceaseless mercy.

The word must go out and has gone out (10:17-18). But like Isaiah, the preachers of good news may experience disbelief and disobedience to the message (10:16). Paul sees himself as part of the team of messengers embodying Isaiah's text about announcing good news about the Messiah to the ends of the earth (10:18; cf. Isa. 52:7-10). Additionally, Paul finds in scripture [Deut. 32:21 and Isa. 65:1] that God is making Israel jealous by finding (i.e., 'saving') those not looking for God (10:19b-20; cf. 9:25-26, 30)—a clear reference to the believing Gentiles of Paul's day.

We do well to stop and ponder the strange path by which the gospel first made its way into the world, humbling the proud and lifting up the lowly. Is that what happens with the preaching of the gospel today?

References:

Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2004, pg. 379-383.

Wright, N. T. *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 2*. Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, pg. 1-21.