

# ROMANS From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 16  
 How it Works with Israel  
 Romans 9:30-10:21  
 Human Responsibility

**Recap**

Romans 9:1-29 talked about God’s sovereignty, then Paul proceeds to address that despite that, humans still have the responsibility in their decisions (Romans 9:30-10:21).

Part 1 of 3: Human responsibility: Jews chose to earn their own righteousness (Romans 9:30-10:4)

**Verse 30-33**

Romans 9:30-33  
 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written:  
  
 “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble  
 and a rock that makes them fall,  
 and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

**1) a) Fill in the blanks. Paul is comparing the righteousness of Gentiles (who just only found out about God’s ways) and Jews (who started following God’s ways since a long time ago). Based on verses 30-32 and video lecture, fill in the blanks below.**

	Gentiles 🐉 (Gentile Christians)	Jews/people of Israel 🇮🇸 (Non-Christians Jews)
Did they pursue righteousness? (from verse)		
Did they obtain the goal of righteousness? (from verse)		
What was the method used to obtain the righteousness (from		

verse)		
What are the two ways of the law? (video lecture)		
What is the motivation behind the obedience? (video lecture)		
Who is trusted in this method? (video lecture)		
Did the method pass or fail in attaining righteousness?		



**b) i) Fill in the blanks. In verses 32-33, Paul says that the Jews will face a stumbling block because they have misunderstood the purpose of the law. Fill in the blanks below on the proper understanding of the law according to the video lecture.**

Obedience to the law was a		of salvation, NOT	
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**ii) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Based on the video lecture and Exodus 19:4-5 on the slavery of Jews in Egypt, which one comes first?**

- A. Obedience
- B. Salvation

<p><b><u>Quick Verse Reference</u></b>  Exodus 19:4-5  ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,</p>
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Jesus as a stepping stone/cornerstone	Jesus as a stumbling rock
Precious	Disaster

Belief	Unbelief
Grateful	Hatred

**2) Reflection question. When Jesus came into the picture, he offered a new way to obtain righteousness, not through earning it. He became the “stumbling block” that was prophesied in Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 which Paul is quoting in Romans 9:3.**

**i) Was Jesus a stepping stone or stumbling block to you when you first heard the salvation offered?**

**ii) Are there people around you who see Jesus as a stumbling block and get angry because they would rather earn their way into heaven?**

**Quick Verse Reference**

Isaiah 8:14

He will be a holy place;  
for both Israel and Judah he will be  
a stone that causes people to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.  
And for the people of Jerusalem he will be  
a trap and a snare.

Isaiah 28:16

So this is what the Sovereign Lord says:  
“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone,  
a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation;  
the one who relies on it  
will never be stricken with panic.

**Verse 1-4**

Romans 10:1-4

Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

**3) a) Reflection question. In verse 1, Paul’s “heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved”. Instead of judging or condemning those who are trying to earn their salvation, Paul’s inner desire and prayer is for his Jewish people to be saved despite**

their stubbornness and insistence to earn their way into heaven. Is that your response towards those who reject the gospel and insist on doing “good works” to earn their way? If not, then repent and pray that God will put this desire in you.

**b) Fill in the blanks. The Jews are zealous (gung-ho) for God, but they channeled the gung-ho effort in the wrong direction/way. Fill in the blanks based on verse 3.**

The Jews sought to		righteousness in their terms,
they did not submit to		(who is Christ)

**c) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. According to the video lecture, what was the culmination or “goal” of the law given to the Jewish people in verse 4?**

- A. To obey so that they can earn their way to heaven
- B. To use as a standard and judge the Gentiles as dirty, unclean, uncivilized, amoral people.
- C. To become like the Son (Jesus Christ)
- D. No goal, want to follow then follow lo, don't want then don't want lo, up to you.




Part 2 of 3: God provides His righteousness through faith in Christ alone, they rejected Him (Romans 10:5-15)

**Verse 5-9**

Romans 10:5-9  
 Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’”(that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

**4) Comprehension question. Paul proceeds to explain the two ways of righteousness in verses 5-8. The first method in verse 5 is “righteousness that is by the law” which is only achievable by Jesus, the second method from verse 6 onwards is “righteousness that is by faith”. Verses 6-9 can be confusing, the table below breaks down the statements. Rewrite the meaning of the verse so that you can easily understand it.**

	Verse 6 (Do not say)	Verse 7 (Do not say)	Verse 8-9 (But what does the bible actually say?)
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Verse content	Do not say: 'Who will ascend into heaven?'	Do not say: 'Who will descend into the deep?'	Say: "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,"
Translation	Do not say God's demand is too high	Do not say God's demand is too deep	Don't say you can't do it, You CAN do it
Verse Comment from the writer	(that is, to bring Christ down)	(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)	that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved
Translation of comment	No need to bring Christ down, cause Jesus already come down from heaven, a descendant of David (Incarnation)	No need to bring Christ up from hell/death, cause Jesus already came up from dead (Resurrection)	Just have to confess our belief in the gospel
Summary of the verse In your own words			

**Background Information**

"Perfection is not a reasonable expectation. Devotion, however, is a faith response that is very much within the reach of humanity" Charles Swindoll

### Transitional Explanation

After Paul explains that since Jesus did the hard work and we believers just need to believe, he proceeds to explain the SOP of believing in Jesus.

### Verse 8-13

Romans 10:8-13

“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**5) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer(s). Since Jesus did all the hard work (and hard carry), what are the steps left that we need to do to be a part of the salvation Jesus has earned for us according to the video lecture?**

- A. Just say the sinner's prayer and you are magically saved.
- B. Outward action- confess with mouth that 'Jesus is Lord' (implies repentance, subservient to Jesus, dependent on Jesus)
- C. Inward disposition- believe with your heart (not just a formula but a way of life)

### Transitional Explanation

Paul just shared the message of the gospel and how to receive it. He then proceeds to share the implication and urgency of sharing the gospel message to the rest of the world.

### Verse 14-15

Romans 10:14-15

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

**6) a) Reflection question. When was the last time you shared the gospel with a non-believer?**

**b) Discussion question. What do you think is the acceptable or minimal amount of gospel sharing? Go one round and share your thoughts.**

- A. No need to share
- B. Once every few years
- C. Once a year

- D. Once a month
- E. Once a week
- F. Once a day
- G. A few times a day

Part 3 of 3: The Jews refused to believe despite every opportunity (Romans 10:16-21)

**Verse 16-21**

Romans 10:16-21

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

“Their voice has gone out into all the earth,  
 their words to the ends of the world.”

Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says,  
 “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation;  
 I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.”

And Isaiah boldly says,  
 “I was found by those who did not seek me;  
 I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”

But concerning Israel he says,  
 “All day long I have held out my hands  
 to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

**7) a) Comprehension question. Help Apostle Paul paraphrase what he is trying to say if he was born in modern-day Malaysia.**

Verse s	Original content	Explanation	If Paul was Malaysian, how would he say it? (Paraphrase)
16a	But not all the Israelites accepted the <b>good news</b> .	After talking about how the good news/gospel about Jesus is spread, Paul makes a statement that not all Jews accepted this news.	
16b-17	For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through	Paul then quotes Isaiah 53:1 where a question is posed on who believe, and since in verse 14-15, he mentioned that one needs to hear about a message	

	the word about Christ.	before believing in it.	
18a	But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:	To reply to a potential “excuse #1” about Jews not hearing the message, Paul insists that the Jews already heard about the good news, and proceeds to give evidence from Old Testament passages.	
18b	“Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”	Evidence from Psalm 19:4	
19a	Again I ask: Did Israel not understand?	To reply to a potential “excuse #2” about Jews not understanding the message, Paul lists 3 evidence passages from the old testament as evidence that the Jews understood.	
19b	First, Moses says,  “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.”	Evidence #1: Deut. 32:21  DA. Carson commentary: God made Israel “envious” to punish them for idolatry.	
20	And Isaiah boldly says,  “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”	Evidence #2: Isaiah 65:1  Refers to Gentiles	
21	But concerning Israel he says,	Evidence #3: Isaiah 65:2	



	<p>“All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”</p>	<p>Refers to Jews</p>	
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Takeaway

**WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JEWS?**

<p><b>God's Sovereignty</b> Romans 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all Israel is True Israel</li> <li>• It is God's Sovereign choice</li> <li>• God will save both Gentiles and Remnant of Jews</li> </ul>	<p><b>Human responsibility</b> Romans 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jews choose to earn their own righteousness instead of righteousness through Christ by faith</li> <li>• Jews hardness of heart</li> </ul>
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Case Studies

**Case 1**

A prominent lay preacher got up to preach in a megachurch in Melbourne recently and talked about the miracle of the “feeding the 5000” in the gospel of Mark. Throughout the message, the emphasis was on bringing what we have to the Lord who will use it miraculously for His kingdom. He ended his sermon with a challenge to anyone who wanted to follow Jesus to just put up their hands to receive Christ. Several people did and the sermon ended.

8) Discussion question.

i) Did the preacher in this church adequately share the gospel by just asking anyone who wanted to accept Jesus to put up their hands?

ii) What's the proper understanding of the gospel according to Romans 10:8-9 and 17?

iii) Do you think the people in the congregation if they were genuinely non-Christians understood what it meant to receive Jesus?

#### Case 2

Jack was sharing the gospel with a friend who had been attending Alpha in his church for some time. There came a time when most of his questions were answered and he was challenged to receive Jesus as Lord. He then started to question how God was so unfair in Romans 9:14-18 that he predestined some people to be saved and others if they were not predestined then they would be eternally damned in hell. He cannot accept Christ because he felt he is not predestined.

He says that even Israelites (God's chosen people), did not become Christians hence even those who were 'supposed to be Christian' were not chosen. How can he be one? As he is worse off than them as he is considered a Gentile.

9) Discussion question. How would you explain to Jack's friend about salvation when he is concerned that he might not be predestined for salvation? You may use the model answer to help you.

#### Model Answer

Yes it is true that God's sovereignty means that He has predestined to have mercy on people which is clearly stated in Romans 9:14-18.

However, show him Romans 9:30-32 ESV:

*"What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works"*

The Gentiles like him ironically were more likely to be saved despite the fact that they did not have all the privilege of being the chosen people and having God's covenant and law.

Hence he should not feel that he is worse off than the Jews.

Israel insisted on working to earn merit and gain their own righteousness by obeying the law. They did not succeed in doing this

True salvation comes from righteousness that only God can give to us if we put our faith in Jesus.

The bible says in Romans 10:9-10 ESV:

*“because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved”*

This is a simple 2 step process and salvation is open to everyone, because:

*“Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*

(Romans 10:11-13 ESV)

God sent his Son Jesus who paid the penalty of our sins.

Israel failed to trust Jesus and insisted on working for their own salvation. The fault does not fall on whether they are chosen or not, predestined or not. The issue is a bold-faced refusal to receive Jesus by faith.

Today the gospel makes it clear that anyone and everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus can be saved. Paul makes it very clear that the issue is not speculating whether or one is predestined but whether one is willing to believe in Christ. It cannot be fairer, salvation is open to every single person. God is the God of all.

### **Practical question**

There are four verbs in Romans 10:14-17 that tell us how evangelism works.

#1

**“Sent”** v.15 means that messengers must be sent. The Greek word *apostello* (“sent”) probably means Paul is thinking about the apostles themselves. So we see that the first step in evangelism is that Christ sent us authoritative witnesses and teachers, whose message is in the Bible. Probably “sent” also refers to how Christ through his church sends out missionaries, preachers, and laypeople to be messengers of that apostolic word.

#2

**“Preach”** v.14c is the word *kerysso*, which was meant to be a “herald” or to make announcements. A herald was in a sense a living newspaper — heralds were a major means of transmitting news in the marketplace and city streets. So the word “preach” does not refer only to what today are called “sermons.” Heralds operated in the streets.

#3

**“Heard”** v.14b. Paul probably has more in mind than mere exposure. This means that saving faith cannot happen mystically, but has to occur in response to the content really penetrating the understanding. For example, just reading the Bible does not save — it is not a process of magic. The message of the Bible needs to really be heard, understood. A person cannot

believe unless the message is given a hearing.

#4

**“Believe”** v.13. This is what makes us Christians.

So what Paul is teaching about evangelism is:

A. It is absolutely necessary: “How can they believe without someone preaching to them” v.15.

B. It requires a willingness to speak out (preach).

C. It requires not just proclamation but persuasion, getting a person’s understanding (hear).

D. It requires the transmission of a body of truth that is not a person’s opinion but the authoritative revelation from Christ and his apostles.

All Christians experience their need for more faith than they have. Our faith is not only born of an understanding of the word of God (Scripture) when we are converted, but it continues to grow only to the degree that we grow in hearing the Word. The deeper our understanding of the Word, and the more often we “hear” it, the greater our faith.

**9) Reflection question. After studying the book of Romans do you think you are now in a position to be able to share with your friend or a family member about the gospel?**

**10) Role-play. Try to share the gospel to group members in a role-play and others can play a role in providing input.**

### **Meditation**

As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news (Romans 10:15 ESV)

What wrong attitudes do I need to repent of?

What is it in these verses that bring comfort?

What is it in these verses that build me up?

Meditate on these for the next week and come back to share with each other how God has spoken to you through the Holy Spirit.