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# Romans

**But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” Romans 10:16**

Paul began chapter 10 with his comments concerning Israel and salvation (verses 1-4); they have a zeal for God, but without proper knowledge. They pursued the law as a means to an end, but Christ is the end-point, purpose, and fulfillment of the law. After that introduction, he supported this by citing Scripture, directly from the law, to demonstrate that the law showed this (verses 5-8). Then he cited the means of salvation (verses 9-13). In verses 14 and 15 he took the time to explain how this message is transmitted; by preaching and through the support of those who have believed.

"But" is Paul's contrasting re-introduction of the reason for Israel's missing the ship of salvation. If belief in Christ's work is the end of the law, as he clearly details, then those who don't believe have wrongly pursued salvation. And this is just the case because, "they have not all obeyed the gospel." This is the tie back to verses 1-4. "Obeying the gospel" is belief in the work of Christ, as he sums up in verse 4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

And to show that this has been a problem of the past with Israel, and a prophecy of the future concerning both them and the gentiles, he now turns to the question asked in Isaiah 53:1, “Lord, who has believed our report?”

Isaiah's question is particularly directed to the Jew who had received all of the advanced notifications of the coming of Messiah. Detailed descriptions of His life and work are found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. And yet, they were not believed. Those same details are now available in every library and bookstore in the world. They are found on the internet, heard on the radio, seen on TV and yet "who has believed" the report?

Isaiah's question implies that what he is about to describe will be rejected. He is clear, but he will still be misunderstood. And, the answer to why is found right in those same ensuing verses of Isaiah 53. Albert Barnes sums it up nicely -

"It would be because he was a root out of a dry ground; because he was a man of sorrows. etc. And this actually took place. Because he did not come with splendor and pomp, as a temporal prince, he was rejected, and put to death."

The world looks for might, flash, glamour, wealth, etc. in their leaders. But this isn't how God entered the stream of humanity. Instead, the Creator united with human flesh, was born in a manger, led an obscure existence until the time of His ministry, offended the leaders of the nation, was crucified, and was buried. And all of this was done without any flash, pomp, display of earthly power, or show of wealth. This was, as far as they could see, a failure - now dead and buried.

The report was given, it was detailed and precise, and it should not have been missed, but it was. The gospel wasn't obeyed in His life and it isn't obeyed in His death and resurrection. Belief in God's provision was and still is rejected for the sake of zeal without knowledge. The pursuit of pleasing God through self has taken precedence over pleasing God through Christ in both Jew and Gentile.

Life application: Obeying the gospel is synonymous with belief. The good news is that the work is accomplished and complete in Christ. Believe and share this good news!

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

Romans 10:17 is another verse which should be committed to memory. It is simple, concise, and carries with it a most important message.

"So then" is a summary statement. In essence, "These things can be summed up as follows..." For a complete perspective on this verse, it would be wise to take a moment to go back and read Romans 10:1-16. By doing so it will help in understanding this important point Paul will now state.

"Faith comes by hearing..." Faith, in this context, is speaking of the properly directed faith of the gospel message. Many have faith, but not all have the right faith. People hear the words of Buddha and have faith in those words, but this isn't the true faith that Paul speaks of. Such is the case with countless misdirected belief systems which have been instituted by man. People exercise faith all the time and they do so without considering the error of the message. Even within supposed Christian denominations, error abounds. Bowing to a statue of Mary is contrary to the truthful message of God.

Even more to the point is that when the message is correct, it may not be received as such. Faith does come by hearing, but this doesn't imply that faith will come by hearing. Rather, it means that faith can only come by hearing. Many hear; not all accept. This is the intent and meaning of Jesus' parable concerning the sower and the seeds in Matthew 13:1-9. The correct message has been given by the Sower, but it may not be received as such, or it may be understood, but not sink in to become heart knowledge. Thus any accompanying confession is not a true profession.

When the proper message is given, when it is received, and when it is believed - then it is the "faith" Paul speaks of here. In what is one of the most egregious errors of understanding the process of exercising faith, we read this almost bizarre analysis of it from *Tabletalk* magazine's daily devotional dated 17

September 2013 - "Dr. RC Sproul has said that the biblical doctrine of salvation can be summed up effectively in three words: regeneration precedes faith."

This is so out of line with what the Bible teaches that it is almost unimaginable to consider how it was ever introduced into the doctrine of soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). In fact, salvation can be summed up in a single sentence, but it has nothing to do with "regeneration preceding faith." It is explicitly stated in Jonah 2:9 in only two Hebrew words - yeshuatah Y'hovah, "Salvation is of the Lord." From this thought, Paul explains that this means faith in the Lord; an acceptance of His provision.

Faith in the Lord brings salvation; faith in the Lord comes by hearing about the Lord; and hearing about the Lord comes "by the word of God." Jonah learned this in the belly of the great fish. The very nature of the process indicates that this is a volitional act of the free-will. Inserting "regeneration" prior to "faith" as is noted above, is inserting a concept foreign to the clearly presented message of the Bible. Man must hear and then man must respond. To be "regenerated" prior to faith would imply that man is saved before he is saved, and it would be universal in its scope. If not universal, then God's regenerative process would be ineffective for some. This particular teaching is taught in seminaries under the course subject "Convoluting Theology 101."

Rather, for there to be a recipient of a message, there must be a source of what is relayed. The term "word of God" is used approximately 50 times in the Bible to describe its contents. It is the word which issues directly from God and which is breathed out to men of God (2 Timothy 3:16) as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). This message, which Jesus argued over even to a single word - such as in John 10:35, is the complete, accurate, and fully sufficient source of bringing faith to the individual.

It is this "word of God" which when heard will bring faith to the one who accepts it for what it is. Jesus explains the process in Luke 11:28 -

"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Neither Jesus here, nor the apostles later, ever state that we are regenerated in order to obey or believe the word. It is, as noted, a volitional act of the free-will.

Life application: Go back, read, and memorize Romans 10:17 and then accept it at face value. Such simple and concise statements need nothing inserted for clarification. Read the word, and then exercise your faith in that same word..

**But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:**

**"Their sound has gone out to all the earth,  
And their words to the ends of the world." Romans 10:18**

Verses 14 and 15 showed the burden of getting the message of salvation out; the transmission of the gospel and the responsibility of the messenger was highlighted. Verses 16 and 17 transitioned from the message and messenger to the receiver. Now verse 18 places that burden on the receiver. "But I say..." is the contrasting thought. "Have they not heard?" This is a rhetorical question. The means of spreading the gospel has been explained and the fact that it was not received by the hearer was noted. But some may say, "Well this isn't fair, I never heard the message." Paul contradicts such a notion. "In fact, it has been sent out."

"Yes indeed" is Paul's declaration. In order to substantiate this, he cites the general thought of Psalm 19:4. This psalm, penned by David, begins with his observations about the universality of the knowledge of God which is evident in creation -

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.  
Day unto day utters speech,  
And night unto night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech nor language  
Where their voice is not heard.  
Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world. Psalm 19:1-4

If David, a man born and raised as a shepherd, and who had no theological training at all, could discern these things, then no one else could claim otherwise. His thoughts thus substantiate that all have heard the voice of God. All have God's general revelation clearly presented to them. This knowledge is sufficient for man to know that God exists and thus man is responsible to Him. But instead of pursuing Him, acknowledging Him, and rightly honoring Him, they seek out their own devices. This then is tied into Paul's thoughts in Romans 1:18-21; man is without excuse.

Now, with the gospel proclaimed, there is an even greater burden on the people to believe. And so Paul equates David's knowledge of general revelation to the now provided and superior knowledge of the gospel - God's specific revelation. By citing the psalm in this way, he is making a wide-ranging statement about the gospel's transmission. This doesn't mean every person had heard the gospel, but that the message had gone out to the inhabited world. This is the same thought (and the same word for "world" is used) as the statement made in Acts 17:6 -

"But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.'"

And so, this "sound" which is the gospel message "has gone out to all the earth." The word "sound" is *phthoggos*. It is used for a musical tone like when an instrument plays or a voice sings. The gospel is this beautiful voice. The "earth" is speaking of the physical earth. This voice has been transmitted on the planet "and their words to the ends of the world." The word for "words" is *rhemata*. This signifies the matter which is being relayed. This subject, the gospel, is what has gone to the "ends of the world." The "world" here being the inhabited world as noted in Acts 17:6 above.

In other words, by using different words for "earth" and "world" Paul demonstrates that the message has been carried over the physical earth and has been relayed to the inhabitants of the earth. It's obvious that even today many haven't actually heard. But the gospel is being transmitted actively and continuously. Those who have heard should have accepted the message. If they did, then the obvious next step would be to pass it on. If they didn't, then they have disobeyed the gospel, first by not believing and then by not passing it on (because they didn't believe.) This goes right back to verse 16, "...they have not all obeyed the gospel."

Life application: All people have heard God's voice through general revelation. This is plainly declared in Scripture. And the message of God's special revelation, the gospel, has gone out and continues to go out through the world and to the people of the world. But it is incumbent on the people to obey the gospel by believing what is heard. If one believes the message, then he will obey Jesus' words to share the good news. The question is, even if you have obeyed by believing, have you obeyed by sharing? It is time to demonstrate your belief through getting the message out.