

Dear Friends,

Often in his writings Paul interacts with either the whole church or with individuals in the church. For example.

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? (Galatians 4:21 KJV)

We have several examples in Romans as well. Paul's introduction to his thoughts, literally to his inspired argument, in Romans 10:18 serve as another example. "But I say" has no literary meaning or purpose unless Paul introduces his own reasoning in response to someone else's arguments that contradict his teaching.

Does God speak to His people through His miracles in nature? I suggest that He does. Examples abound. If you have observed some of those miracles, you likely agree, for you have heard His voice of power and grace in that work. This does not imply that God so powerfully speaks in nature that we have no need for a Bible or for the gospel. God bears witness to Himself and His work in many different ways, all contributing and strengthening our perception of His person. An eyewitness told me many years ago of hearing a man confess that the Jesus whom he heard magnified in the gospel was the same Jesus who appeared to him in his native land years before he knew of the Bible or the Christian faith.

In Romans 10 a centerpiece of Paul's reasoning with his disagreeing critics deals with the *"righteousness which is of faith"* and her speaking to the person in whom she dwells. In the verses immediately prior to our study passage, Paul gives voice to his critics' ideas, specifically to their rejection of this idea, so now in our study passage he will respond to their argument and affirm that God does speak to all of His people in His time and way, and with no need for human aid or instruments.

The challenge of the moment for us is not whether this *"righteousness which is of faith"* exists or not, or that it resides within every born again person, but whether we are listening to her message. Are we listening? Do we believe what she teaches us? Does our lifestyle, especially our faith toward Jesus and our words and attitudes toward other believers, bear witness that we are listening and believing that message of faith within?

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

Please send all communications to me at holder.joe@gmail.com.

Ignored and Misunderstood Scriptures

(Romans 10:18-21)

But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.
(Romans 10:18-21 KJV 1900)

Remember the dialectical argument literary style I mentioned recently. This literary style was highly disciplined and respected in the first century world. Paul worked to fairly represent his critics so that they had no complaint that he misrepresented their belief. If he hoped to win them to the faith of Jesus, to convince them to listen to the words of faith spoken by the “*righteousness which is of faith*” in their own hearts, he must fairly represent their present ideas.

“***But I say***” has no literary purpose unless Paul has just represented his critics’ ideas in the previous verses. Be cautious allowing errant teachers to suggest that a single word in the Bible is without purpose. The inspired description of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 will not allow the idea. Nor will the precise language of Psalm 12:6-7; take careful note of this language, “***The words of the Lord...***” not merely the broad flowing ideas of the Lord.

In the previous verses Paul’s critics raised their objection to Paul’s teaching of the indwelling “*righteousness which is of faith*” in every born again person. According to their belief, a human teacher was essential to communicate the same message which Paul taught was communicated directly by the “*righteousness which is of faith.*” This belief is, at the least, similar to the contemporary idea that a human witness must teach the gospel to a person before they can be born again. Whether Paul’s critics believed the new birth was contingent on this human witness, or they believed that the knowledge of the faith was contingent on the human witness we may not fully grasp.

Acts 15 and Paul’s reasoning in the whole Book of Galatians affirms that some Jews who believed in Jesus believed that a non-Jew must become a Jew (Likely through their established proselyte teaching) before converting to Jesus and true New Testament faith. Were these people the same people whom Paul addresses and with whom he reasons in Romans? Possibly, in Verse 4 Paul says they have not submitted to Jesus, “...*the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*” He further informs us that they have not listened to the communication of that “*righteousness which is of faith*” that resided in them. Paul’s critics in Romans are at least similar to the legalistic believers in Acts 15, people who were members of the Jerusalem Church. (Acts 15:24; they “*went out from us.*” Does this mean they departed from the faith? Or that they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch where they created the controversy? We can’t know beyond question. Our conclusion will shape our view of the people somewhat differently) That they taught that believers in Jesus must “*be circumcised after the manner of Moses*” makes the point that they did not understand that Jesus was the “*end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*” Failing this knowledge, they would teach the hybrid error of Moses and Jesus, that New Testament believers remain under Moses and the law as well as under Jesus. This belief contradicts Paul’s affirmation (Romans 6:15) that New Testament believers are “***not under the law, but under grace.***” A thorough study of this context erases any thought that Paul intended to teach that New Testament believers have no moral responsibility to live godly lives. Being under grace obligates believers to live after Jesus’ personal example, never, not even passively to “yield”

themselves to sin in any form, but rather to obey “**from the heart that form** (Mold or cast) **of doctrine**” which they had learned in the gospel. When a New Testament believer says that the path of teaching a new believer is first to “Put them under Moses and the law” before teaching them about Jesus, they reveal that they follow Paul’s Roman’s critics, not Paul and the New Testament. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father spoke His will clearly, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **hear ye him.***” (Matthew 17:5b) Moses was present, but the Father did not say, “Hear ye him and Moses.”

Paul’s critics made a major point of believing that all God’s children do not hear the message/voice of God, so a man must communicate it to them. How does Paul respond?

*Have they not heard? **Yes verily**, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*

Paul contradicts their belief. “Yes,” says Paul, they have heard. Do you recognize the words that follow in Paul’s reply? He quoted from Psalm 19.

*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. **Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.** In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.* (Psalm 19:1-4; words quoted by Paul in bold print)

Folks, this is Paul’s reasoning, inspired reasoning approved and contained in New Testament Scripture. The God who planted faith and her indwelling testimony “**which speaketh on this wise**” in the hearts of these people is the same God who created the material universe, so that it also speaks of Him and His glory. Both are His creation and both bear witness to Him and His glory. Both “teach” and “speak” of their Creator. Neither David nor Paul suggest that nature so fully preaches the gospel that a born again person does not need the information and faith of the gospel as it is revealed in Scripture and in the preaching of “**Jesus and the resurrection.**” But both Paul and David emphatically affirm that nature and indwelling faith “speak” and point the born again person who listens and believes to Jesus.

But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. In this point Paul goes to the heart of the issue with his critics, apparently Jewish people who needed a clearer understanding and belief in Jesus. They possessed this indwelling faith, but they refused to listen to her “speech” to them.

Paul’s critics quoted Old Testament Scripture which they thought supported their belief, though Paul’s response says that they misinterpreted those passages. Paul responds by quoting several Old Testament passages and giving them a correct interpretation.

He first quoted Deuteronomy 32:21, “*I will provoke you to jealousy....*” How did God provoke Israel, Jewish people, God’s Old Testament people, to jealousy by a “No-body” people? He did so by

sending the gospel and its blessings to Gentiles with the same blessings that believing Jews received in it, “***For there is no difference....***” (Romans 10:12) Whether first century or immediately prior to the Second Coming, the New Testament teaches that God’s blessings now fall on His children alike, based on their response to the message communicated to them by “*the righteousness which is of faith,*” not influenced at all by their race or culture.

Then Paul quotes Isaiah. *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.* (Isaiah 65:1) If people who were not seeking God found Him, and people saw Him who were not looking for Him, God must be the active agent, not the people in question. Again, Isaiah emphasizes the same point as Moses. Jewish people who, by history and knowledge of the Old Testament “Oracles,” should have known and sought after God and His ways failed to find or see Him, but another people, Gentiles, who, by nature, had no background to prepare them for God, found and saw Him.

But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. (Isaiah 65:2) For a time God continued to reach out to His Jewish people, but even divine long-suffering has its limits. Consider Jesus’ warning to them in His Olivet Discourse.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matthew 23:37-39)

In the verses prior to this quote, Jesus warns these people that God’s judgment against their past historical rebellion would congeal and fall upon that generation. Rightly so, for that generation didn’t reject another prophet. They rejected God Himself in the person of their Messiah, God in human flesh.

Notice that Jesus didn’t say they wouldn’t see His face as a people till near the Second Coming when He would restore them. He added one specific qualification to their seeing His face, a timeless contingency. “...*till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*” God doesn’t dispense His blessings on groups of people so much now as He blesses individual believers who respond to that distinct voice of faith that speaks in their heart. And His response to them has to do with that voice of faith, not at all to do with their race or culture, or, for that matter, the time. If that voice of faith resides in them, and if they hear and believe it, they shall see His face. If they refuse to hear and believe that internal witness, they remain under Jesus’ judgment. That judgment holds for every born again person, regardless of their race or culture, Jew or Gentile. We see its manifestation in Cornelius. (Acts 10) He bore evidence of indwelling faith long before Peter arrived and preached to him. (Acts 10:1-4)

We have this witness within. Do we “Hear” and believe her testimony?