

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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ROMANS 9-10

General George Armstrong Custer pretended to be friendly to the Indians, but he never really listened to their pleas. The Sioux and Cheyenne came to view Custer as their bitter enemy, and killed him the battle of Little Big Horn. When the Indian squaws found Custer's body, they took a sharp awl and pierced countless holes in his ears. They believed the holes would help him listen better in the after-world! And this *Indian myth* reflects a *biblical truth* – whether our ears are pierced or not, we'll all hear better in the after-life. In heaven, issues we struggled to comprehend today – doctrines that dumfound us now – will be perfectly explained to us by God Himself.

This is a truth we need to remember when we approach Romans 9-11. The doctrines of [predestination](#) and [free will](#) are some thorny theology. They've been discussed and debated since the Church was born. I'm sure complete comprehension won't be grasped this side of heaven. Here's where we need a healthy realization of our own limitations. A little humility is helpful.

Romans 1-8 deals with [the principles of salvation](#). Romans 12-16 will discuss [the practicals of salvation](#). In between *the principles* and *the practicals* Romans 9-11 delves into [a problem with salvation](#)... Romans 9-11 answers the question... [Now that salvation has come to the Gentiles what is God's attitude toward the Jews?](#)

Romans 9 is some pretty heady stuff – it's a collection of Paul's most intellectual arguments – that's why it's interesting that he begins by revealing his heart. Verse 1, [“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.”](#) Paul is brokenhearted over the lost-ness of Israel. Unless you have family who doesn't know Jesus it's difficult to grasp the depth of Paul's grief. You share so much of life with your family members your heart aches when you know you are at odds with what's most important. This is how Paul felt toward his fellow Hebrews. He's about to say some hard things to the Jews. He first wants them to know how much he loves them. The thought of his kinfolk burning in the flames of hell grieved him.

Paul makes a mind-boggling statement in verse 3, [“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh...”](#) The Greek word translated [“accursed”](#) is the word [“anathema.”](#) It couldn't be stronger. It means [“to deliver a soul to eternal damnation.”](#) *Paul is willing to go to hell if it meant the Jews could go to heaven!* You think of the Secret Service Agents who are prepared to put their life on the line to protect the President. They're willing to take a bullet for him. But that's nothing compared to Paul's sacrifice. He would be willing to forego – not just life on earth, but his eternal life – in order to save the Jews.

Once, two men were discussing their respective churches... The first guy said, [“You guys just got a new pastor. Why did you fire the old one?”](#) His buddy replied, [“Well, he spoke too much about hell.”](#) [“What about the new pastor, what subject does he speak on?”](#) [“He speaks on hell too.”](#) The guy was confused, [“What's the difference if both men speak on hell?”](#) His friend explained, [“Well, when the old pastor told folks](#)

they were going to hell it sounded like he was glad, but when the new pastor tells people they are going to hell it sounds like it's breaking his heart." This was Pastor Paul...

Paul was willing to go to hell if it meant the Jews could be saved... *Why won't we walk next door... or take a coworker to lunch... or make a phone call to invite someone to church?* Realize, in the next 30 seconds 39 people in this world will die. Every hour 5000 people leave this world to meet their Maker – and most of them step out into a Christ-less eternity. This realization should coax a tear from us... cause a prayer... motivate us to share our faith. It's been said, *"To love a thing, means wanting it to live."*

Paul's *passion* for the Jews was enhanced by their *privileges*. In a spiritual sense they had it all going for them, *"who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."* Paul recalls their amazing benefits... the greatest of which was Jesus. He was born a Jew. There's an old saying, *"You don't get to pick your relatives."* Unless you're God! Of all the nations, God chose the Jews to be His relatives. In so many ways, the Hebrew people had been God's partner in salvation. Yet tragically, we're told in John 1:11, *"Jesus came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."* This was a blown opportunity of mega-proportions.

For two millenniums the Jews had occupied a special place in God's plan. That's why Paul's readers were puzzled as to why they weren't saved... I would've answered their question by insisting that the Jews had a choice, and they chose to reject Jesus... *but Paul surprises us*. He takes a different tact. He says what has happened to the Jews is a result of God choice!

Verse 6, *"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel..."* Here's Paul's first point – the Jews had trusted their **bloodline** and **behavior** to save them, but that alone was never enough. A real relationship with God was the result of **belief** or faith. Not everyone with Jewish blood was a *true Jew* in the eyes of God.

Verse 7, *"Nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.'" That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.'* Remember, Abraham had two sons. *Biologically*, Ishmael was his son, but *spiritually speaking* God never recognized Ishmael. In Genesis 22:2, God told Abraham, *"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering..."* God called "Isaac," Abraham's "only son". The true family of God was never just about **bloodline**. Pedigree was never enough. This shocked the Jews. They figured since they were the kids of Abraham they were automatically accepted by God. They were wrong.

The other trait Israel trusted in was their **behavior**. To a Jew salvation was something *due!* It was a paycheck you earned through doing good deeds. This is the error Paul tackles next, verse 10, *"And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.'" Rebecca had twin boys, and before either of them attended church, or gave an offering, or fed a poor person, or jumped off a stranger with a dead battery - before they did their first good deed God chose Jacob over Esau.*

In fact, later in life, Jacob will swindle Esau. Jacob proved to be the more diabolical of the two - yet God chose Jacob over his brother. Paul's point is it had nothing to do with their **pedigree** or **performance** - it was **predetermined**. The boy's place in God's family was a matter of election or God's choice. Verse 13 puts it, "As it is written, *"Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."* Understand the figure of speech. This is hyperbole or exaggeration. God loved Esau, but His plans for Jacob made his plans for Esau look like hate.

Here's the point, prior to either child sliding down the birth canal - before they lifted a hand to prove or disprove their worthiness - God *elects* Jacob and *rejects* Esau. God's choices are based on neither *bloodline*, or *behavior*. And here's where it gets even stickier... Ultimately, neither are God's choices based on **belief**. God chose Jacob over Esau in-utero - before they could work or have faith. As Paul says in verse 11, it was done so *"that the purpose of God according to election might stand..."* In a sense, it's God's choice - not man's - that decides our eternal destiny. God *saves whom He chooses*, and *condemns whom He chooses*.

And after hearing that, you'll relate to verse 14, "What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?*" It doesn't seem fair! We should be the Captain of our own Fate! *Is God a tyrant?* The answer... "Certainly not!" Especially in the US, Americans value *equal opportunity*. Everyone should be free to make their own choice. Of course, we get this concept from the Bible. One of the ways man was made in God's image was the authority to choose his own destiny. The theologians say, man is a *free moral agent*. We're quick to defend our right to choose, but what about God? Doesn't God get a choice? Isn't salvation His to give? Why shouldn't God have the freedom to give salvation to whoever He pleases?... He's God!

Verse 15, "For He says to Moses, *"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."* So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." In other words, it's all up to God who receives mercy! I'm afraid that because God has made salvation so simple and accessible we assume it's our right. We forget that - after 6000 years of sordid human history - God would be perfectly just to throw us all in hell and start over. To me, it's not as surprising that God hated Esau, as it is that He loved Jacob! It's astonishing to me, that God loves any of us for that matter.

I once worked for a boss who on occasion would allow us to leave an hour early on Fridays and still pay us for a full day. But after a while we started expecting to leave early *every Friday*. Whenever we had to work the full day we'd start sucking sour grapes. "Oh, this isn't fair!" We lost appreciation for our *boss' benevolence*. We misinterpreted *the boss' mercy* as *our right*. Don't say it's not fair for God to save some and not others. God doesn't owe salvation to anyone! We all deserve the flames of hell. The only reason any of us are forgiven is God chooses to give us a gift we don't deserve.

We're all glad God has given us a choice, so why begrudge Him His? Verse 17, "For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, *"For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."* Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." Paul points to the Pharaoh of the Exodus as an example of a person God chose to reject. God hardened Pharaoh's heart! Verse 19, "You will say to me then, *"Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"* Paul anticipates a logical objection. How is it fair for God to harden a man's heart, then hold him accountable for that hardness? Of course, go back to Exodus 8:32. It tells us Pharaoh hardened his own heart. *God's sovereignty didn't override the Pharaoh's compliant and obedient heart*. God *stiffen* a heart that was already committed to *stubbornness*.

And this is the argument I would've emphasized. If I were writing Romans, here is where I would've tried to balance out God's election with man's responsibility – *but not Paul*. He keeps beating the drum of God's sovereignty! Verse 20, **“But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”** Paul is clear, the *clay* has no say! What right does the clay have to dictate orders to the potter. The clay has no authority. The potter has complete mastery over the clay.

Paul writes, **“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”** Notice, Paul isn't speaking in absolutes – this is a **“what if”** argument. Paul isn't saying this is how it actually works out. He's speaking hypothetically... **“What if God...”** created the lost Gentiles of the world as whipping boys - for the sole purpose of showing off His wrath and sending them to Hell. Then He chose the Jews for the sole purpose of revealing His mercy and transporting them to Heaven. **“vessels of wrath prepared for destruction”, and “vessels of mercy... prepared... for glory.”** *Not that He did, but “what if?”*

Even if that's how God drew it up, *then so be it!* He has that right! It's His prerogative! God can populate Heaven and Hell however He chooses. And a finite man is not in a position to question or criticize an Infinite God. *What if* God took you – a lump of clay – and made you into a elegant set of fine china that was cherished for generations... Or he took you – a lump of clay – and made you a target for a skeet-shooting competition. You were made for the sole purpose of getting blown to smithereens just for the fun of it. Either way it's up to God! We've got no right to question the Almighty. We're just clay. Some of us refuse to let God be God. Yet, we won't fully appreciate God's salvation until we acknowledge His ultimate sovereignty.

Granted, such dominance would be scary for a lump of clay if it weren't for the Potter's hands. As the Potter handles the clay we can see Jesus' scars. We are more than mere clay to this Potter. God purchased us with the blood of His Son! We are valuable to Him. If God paid so much for us He's not going to waste our lives. Whatever His plan for my life might be - it's good. God loves us, and our highest good is found in the center of His will.

So what does the Bible teach? **God's predestination** - that my eternal destiny was decided by God, before I was born? Or **man's free will** - that every human being has the responsibility to accept or reject Jesus? ***Well, I believe the Bible teaches both the sovereignty of God and human responsibility!*** God chose me... but it's also up to me to choose Him. In Romans 9 Paul pounds away at predestination, but in the very next chapter – Romans 10:13 he writes, **“Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”** I believe both doctrines, because the Bible teaches them both... Yet here's the rub, ***how we reconcile these truths remains a mystery!***

It's like me holding up a quarter between us, and asking you to describe what you see... **“George Washington's head.”** Then you ask me what I see, **“An eagle with its wings spread.”** Though the descriptions seem irreconcilable, the truth is, we're looking at the same object... just from two different angles. This is the case with salvation. God commands us to choose. From our perspective it's all up to us – it depends on our free will. But once we choose we realize that before the world began God predestined us to be saved.

Once a wise, old man heard his pastor teach on the doctrine of election. He commented, **“Long ago I settled that issue. If God didn't choose**

me before I was born, I'm sure He would've seen nothing in me to choose afterwards." Someone has suggested when we enter heaven - engraved on the gate will be the words, "Whosoever will may come." But once we enter, we'll look at the inside of the gate and see, "Chosen before the foundation of the world."

I'll never forget coming home and finding a jar in the floor with a lid lying nearby. The label read, "Warning, biological material, teratogenic and mutagenic agents present!" I panicked. Oh no, the boys have been out in the woods, and they've brought a poison into the house! We're contaminated! But it didn't take long for Kathy to calm my fears. The jar and the lid turned out to be the thermos that went with Nick's Jurassic Park lunch box. The point is... **things are not always as they seem.**

Picture two ropes hanging from the ceiling... one goes up, the other comes down. The arrangement looks unrelated – both ropes look to be moving in opposite directions. But what if you popped a few ceiling tiles, and discovered the two ropes were actually the same rope strung over a pulley. I think this is what we'll discover when we get to heaven. We assume that our free will and God's sovereignty are at odds. In reality they are working hand and hand. There is no contradiction after all - a higher logic known only to God - is at work reconciling the two truths together in our salvation. Isaiah 55:8-9, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

I like the quote, "Try to explain the doctrine of election and you'll lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul." I believe the Bible teaches two what seem to be irreconcilable doctrines, and it does so for a reason. It's a reminder to haughty humans that we don't know it all. Especially when it comes to our salvation. Reconciliation with God is His work, not ours. Here's the first rule of theology. "Never put a question mark where God has placed a period." God doesn't always owe us an explanation. I'm sure you've heard the expression, "Inquiring minds want to know." But at some point "Inquiring minds need to bow." Salvation is all about faith.

The question Paul's readers were asking was about the apparent change in status of the Jews. The Jews had always been the heirs of salvation, *but they weren't the people getting saved.* The Gentiles were embracing Jesus. As a result, people had accused God of being an Indian-giver. *If God promised salvation to the Jews, and they weren't saved – how could the Gentiles be confident of God's promise?* To answer the question Paul brings up several OT passages that predicted this flip-flop – *salvation to the Gentiles and judgment on the Jews.* He begins by quoting Hosea 2:23... "As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved." Recall Hosea's bizarre story.

God told the prophet to marry a prostitute. Hosea's marriage was a symbol of God's relationship with Israel. Israel had been an unfaithful bride and chased after idols. Hosea and the hooker named their third child "Lo-Ammi" which means "not my people." It was prophetic of Israel's plight. God would withdraw from Israel His "favored nation status." In essence, the Hebrew nation was placed on suspension - and God signed a new player to take their place on the roster - *the Gentiles.* "I will call them My people, who were not my people." God adopted the Gentiles!

"And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God." This was important. God included the Gentiles into His family, but did that mean He was *through* with the Jew? Not hardly. **Now way Hose(a)!** One day the Jews in Israel will embrace Jesus as their Messiah.

Verse 27, “Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel (Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22-23): *“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.”* This *“short work”* is the seven year period known as the Great Tribulation. God will pour out plagues and ravage planet Earth for two reasons – to **punish the wicked**, and to **purify the Jew**. The Jews who survive the Great Tribulation Isaiah calls *“the remnant”* – they’re the ones who will be saved.

“And as Isaiah said before: (Here Paul quotes from Isaiah 1:9 and Isaiah 13:19) *“Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.”* God has refused to wipe out the Jews. In the end Israel will be saved.

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.” What an irony! Imagine, a football thrown downfield. It bounces off the intended receiver and into the hands of his teammate. This is the story of our salvation! The Jews were the intended target - the Gentiles were just jogging downfield. The Jews were vying for the ball, but the Gentiles were in the right place at the right time – without doing much they caught a carom and scored.

Yet if God is a perfect passer why didn’t the Jews make the catch? Verse 32, *“Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.”* The Jews tried to earn what could only be received by faith. The Gentiles had nothing but faith. They knew they were underserving. The Jews missed salvation because they wanted to *buy it* with their own goodness and good works. The Gentiles just *bumped into it* by faith.

Chapter 9 ends *“For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.”* He quotes Psalm 118, *As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”* It was predicted by the prophets that the Jews would stumble over their Messiah. Rather than see Jesus as *THE WAY* they saw Him as *in the way*. He didn't fit their Messianic stereotypes. He was a *rock in their shoe*, rather than the *rock on which they leaned!* They weren't willing to come by faith!

Chapter 10, *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.”* Understand, at the time, the Jews were the most religious people on the planet. Yet Paul declares that the Jews weren’t saved. This is like saying the Pope isn’t saved. I've been to the Vatican in Rome. Its a bastion of religion. Twenty-four hours a day liturgies are *read* and prayers are *said*. Candles and incense burn like a forest fire. Whether the Pope is actually saved or not is between him and God, yet Paul’s point is that religion alone doesn’t equal salvation.

“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God...” Jerusalem is the only city on earth where riots erupt on the streets for violations of a holy day. Walk into ultra-orthodox neighborhood dressed immodestly and residents will stone you. The problem with the Jews isn’t a lack of zeal, but a lack of knowledge. *“They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”* In other words, they want to please God, but go about it the wrong way. *“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”* If you want to get to *God’s heaven* you’ve got to follow *God’s directions*. And the path is not a *self-righteousness*, but receiving *God’s righteousness*.

Verse 4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, *"The man who does those things shall live by them."* The Law required a flawless routine. One slip and you were breaking the whole enchilada. Here's the problem living under the Law, "You can keep all of the commandments some of the time, or keep some of the commandments all of the time, but no one can keep all of the commandments all of the time." Remember the old Smith-Barney commercials. "We make money the old-fashioned way. We earn it." This was the Jewish view of righteousness.

"But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, *"Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'"* (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, *"Who will descend into the abyss?"* (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." Americans believe hard work and determination are omnipotent. Hard work may get you places on earth, but it won't get you anywhere with God. Don't think you can coax God down from heaven with good deeds. Nor think you can conjure God up with mystical techniques. You've met people who are into the so-called "deep things". They wear crystals and chant mantras. They've got all sorts of metaphysical feelers out - looking for God.

I've got a friend who isn't content with Christianity. He has to explore weird spiritual novelties. Last I talked to him, he was into Jewish kabbalah. I wrote him, "The deepest thought I've ever heard is - *Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!*" Connecting with God isn't the result of *earning divine favor* or *learning a divine formula* - God has made it so much simpler...

Verse 8, "But what does it say? *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"* (that is, the word of faith which we preach):" God is as near to you as the tip of your tongue. Salvation is not a reward to which you *aspire*. It's not a secret you try to *acquire*. It's a free gift you simply *desire*. All you have to do is have faith enough to ask God...

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Salvation isn't *building* a portfolio of good works... Nor is it *wielding* mystical powers. It's simply *yielding* control of your life to Jesus! It's not *flexing my muscle*, or *straining my brain* - it's *bending my knee* and *pledging my allegiance*. "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Real faith *starts* in the *heart*, but it *comes* out of the *mouth*. Faith includes an *inner pledge*, and an *outer witness*. "For the Scripture says, *"Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."*

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him." Everyone gets saved the exact same way. "For *"whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."* The emphasis in Chapter 9 was God's sovereignty in salvation - it's up to Him! But in Chapter 10 it's all up to us... Here in Romans - in back-to-back chapters - the Bible teaches both perspectives as it does throughout.

It's amazing how two doctrines - though so irreconcilable in theory - work so well in practice. If someone complains, "This isn't fair, God didn't choose me?" I'll reply, "How do you know?" "Well, I'm not a Christian." "Why aren't you a Christian? The Bible says whoever wills may come." "Yes, but I'm not sure I want to come?" "Well then, maybe you're not chosen!" 2 Peter 3:9 tells us, "The Lord is... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." Don't blame your unwillingness on God. Henry Ward Beecher use to say, "The elect are the whosoever will, and the non-elect are the whosoever won't." Election is a comfort, not a cop-out.

The first half of chapter 10 spoke of [the simplicity of salvation](#) – now the second half speaks of [the serious of evangelism](#). God has made salvation simple, attainable, and available. Now it's our job to spread the good news! He makes his point with a string of four rhetorical questions in verse 14... "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" Before a truth is *believed* it has to be *received*... But to be received it has to be delivered... And to be delivered there has to be a deliverer.

This is why a silent witness isn't enough. You can't say, "People don't like to be preached at - I'll let my life speak for itself." It's vital to live an attractive life – but unless at some point, you offer a verbal explanation, how will they know what makes you tick? Lost people need a preacher... *and you're it!* "Too many Christians are like the Artic river, frozen over at the mouth."

Recall, Romans 2 taught us we'll all get judged by the light we receive. You might think, "Why take the Gospel to the pygmy and risk its rejection? He's not accountable for what he doesn't know. Ignorance is bliss." But here's the problem... Nobody faithfully lives up to the truth they've known. *Has the pygmy ever violated his conscience or done an evil deed?* God may save the repentant, trusting, seeking pagan - but how many repentant pagans are there? When a pygmy invites you over for dinner he's not necessarily being nice! You might be on the menu. *Ignorance is not bliss*. Everybody needs transformation – and it's only available in Jesus.

Paul says in verse 15, "As it is written: *How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!*" On occasion someone will compliment me on my dashing handsome features. They'll remark about my muscular physique - or movie star eyes – or they'll admire my chin... *both of them*. But no one has ever commented on my feet... [Only God praises feet!](#) Feet are God's favorite human feature. When he sees a pair of feet that carry the Gospel He thinks they're beautiful! All husbands admire their wives – and Jesus is no exception. The bridegroom looks at His bride, and thinks she's beautiful... but what grabs His attention isn't her hair, or face, or figure... but the feet that carry the Gospel.

Verse 16, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, *LORD, who has believed our report?*" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." There are all kinds of short-cuts to spiritual growth - *emotionally-charged meetings, soul-stirring music, attention-grabbing gimmicks, spine-tingling experiences* – [but short-cuts lead to dead-ends](#). Jeremiah spoke to this issue in 23:28, "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" There are no substitutes for God's Word – it's the wheat compared to the chaff. DL Moody said he spent years praying for God to increase his faith... but his prayers were in vain. One day he recalled Romans 10:17, got up from his knees, and opened His Bible. He said his faith had been growing ever since...

Verse 18, "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.*" "But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: *I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.*" Next week we'll discuss this subject of [jealously evangelism](#). "But Isaiah (65:1-2) is very bold and says: *I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.*" The Gentiles caught the ball off the carom. "But to Israel he says: *All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.*" The Jews had rejected God's pleadings – they'd turned their backs on Him. [Is God through with the Jew?](#) We'll answer that question in Romans 11...