

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ROMANS 9-10

General George Armstrong Custer of the US Cavalry pretended to be friendly to the Indians, but he never really listened to their pleas. The Sioux and Cheyenne tribes came to view Custer as their bitter enemy.

They killed him at the battle of Little Big Horn.

And 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 little *Indian myth* reflects a *biblical truth* - whether our ears are pierced or not, **we will all hear better in the after-life.**

In heaven, the issues we struggle to comprehend today - the doctrines that dumfound us now - will be perfectly explained to us by God Himself.

This is the 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.

With Romans 9-11, a little humility goes a long way.

Romans 1-8 dealt with **the principles in salvation.**

Romans 12-16 discuss **the practicals of salvation.**

But 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 by grace through faith in Jesus has come to the Gentiles what is God's attitude toward the Jews?

Romans 9 is 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." He's brokenhearted over the lost-ness of Israel.

Unless you have immediate family who don't know Jesus, it's difficult to grasp the depth of Paul's grief. You share so much with your family, your heart aches to know they're at odds with what's most vital to you.

This is how Paul felt toward his fellow Hebrews. He's about to say hard things to them. He first wants them to know how much he loves them. The thought of his Jewish-kin burning in the flames of hell grieves 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 "*anathema*." It couldn't be stronger. It means "*to deliver a soul to eternal damnation*." Realize, Paul is willing to go to hell if it meant the Jews could go to heaven!

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 the commander and chief. 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, didn't you. Why did you fire the old one?"* His buddy replied, "Well, he spoke too much about hell."

The first guy asks, *"What about the new pastor, what subject does he speak on?"* His buddy says, "He speaks on hell too." The guy was confused, *"Well, 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 the heart of Pastor Paul... Paul was willing to go to hell if it meant the Jews could go to heaven...

Which should cause us to seriously consider. If Paul was willing to go to hell for the people he loved...

Why won't we walk next door... or take a coworker to lunch... or make a call to invite someone to church?

Realize, in the next 30 seconds 39 people 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 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 made, "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 the amazing benefits given to the Jews. 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 Hebrews 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 so puzzled as to why they weren't saved...

I would've answered their question by insisting the Jews had a choice, and they chose to reject Jesus...

But Paul surprises us with a different rationale. What happened to the Jews was the result of God's 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 trusted in their **bloodline** to save them, but that was never enough to make them righteous. A real relationship with God is not the result of *bloodline*, but of **belief**.

In God’s estimation, not everyone with Jewish blood was a *true Jew - that is, a true child 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 firstborn 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”.

God’s people were never just about **bloodline**. Pedigree was never enough. This shocked the Jews. They figured since they were the heirs of Abraham they were automatically accepted by God. *Not so!*

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, Jacob and Esau, and before either of them had done a thing - *attended church, or given an offering, or fed a poor person* - before they did their first good deed God chose Jacob over Esau.

In fact, later in life, Jacob swindles Esau. He proves 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 **performance** - it was **predetermined**.

The boy’s place in God’s family was a matter of election, or God’s choice. Verse 13 quotes Malachi 1:2-3, “*As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”*” This a figure of speech called hyperbole or exaggeration. God actually loved both boys, but His plans for Jacob made his plans for Esau look like hate.

Here’s the point Paul is reaching, prior to either child sliding down the birth canal - or before they lifted a hand to prove or disprove their worthiness - God *elected* Jacob and *rejected* 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 the boys 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 just doesn't seem fair, does it? We should be the Captain of our own Fate! *Is God a tyrant?*

And Paul's answer is *“Certainly not!”*

Especially in the United States, Americans value *equal opportunity*. Everyone should be free to make their own choices. 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*.

But think about this, we're quick to defend *our* right to choose, but what about *God's* right to choose?

Doesn't God get a choice? Isn't salvation His to give? Why shouldn't God have the right and freedom to give that salvation to whoever He pleases? *He's God!*

Verse 15 stresses this point, *“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 up to God as to who receives mercy!... I'm afraid that because God made salvation so simple and so 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 that God loves any of us for that matter.

I once worked for a boss who on occasion allowed us to leave an hour early on Fridays and paid 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 all 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 folks and not save others. *God doesn't owe salvation to anyone!*

We all deserve the flames of hell. The only reason any of us are forgiven is because God chooses to give us a gift that we seriously 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 that God chose to reject.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart, so He could bring him down and in doing so demonstrate His power!

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 that man accountable for his hardness? Of course, we gain insight into this by going back to the OT passage. Exodus 8:32 tells us Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Understand, *God's sovereignty didn't override 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 I would try to balance out *God's election with man's responsibility.* Yes, God hardens hearts, but only after a person hardens their own heart. But that isn't the argument Paul musters. 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 tell the potter what he can and cannot do. 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 speak dogmatically - he's using a *“what if”* argument. Paul isn't saying this is how it actually works out. He's speaking hypothetically...

“What if God” created the world's lost Gentiles as whipping boys. They were created for the sole purpose of God showing off His wrath by sending them to Hell.

Then He chose the Jews for the sole purpose of revealing His mercy and transporting them to Heaven.

As Paul puts it, *“vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,”* and *“vessels of mercy prepared for glory.”* Paul doesn't say that's what God did, but *“what if?”*

Of course, even if that is how God drew it up, *so be it!* He has the right! God can populate heaven and hell however He chooses. **And finite men are not in a position to question or criticize an Infinite God.**

What if God took you - a lump of clay - and turned you into a elegant set of china that's cherished for generations... Or *what if* he took you - a lump of wet 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're just clay. We have no right to question the purpose of our Creator. *Here's the problem, some of us refuse to let God be God.*

There's a scene from the movie Rudy, where Rudy wonders if he's prayed enough to get into Notre Dame.

A priest tells him, "Son, in 35 years of religious studies I've come up with only two hard incontrovertible facts, **there is a God and I am not Him.**" God does as He pleases. He answers to no one, including you and I.

And we won't fully appreciate God's salvation until we first acknowledge God's ultimate sovereignty.

Granted, such dominance would be scary for a lump of clay, if it were not for the Potter's skillful hands.

And when it comes to the hands of *our* Potter we see His sacrificial scars. We know His hands move at the impulse of a heat that loves us enough to die for us.

We are more than mere clay to our Potter. God purchased us with the blood of His only Son!

We are valuable to Him. And if God paid that much for us, He's not going to waste our lives. Whatever His plan for my life might be - it's a good one. God loves us. Our highest good is found in the center of His will.

So what does the Bible actually teach?

Does it advocate **God's predestination**? That my eternal destiny is decided by God, before I'm born?

Or does it teach **man's free will** - that every human 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 God...

In Romans 9 Paul pounds away at the issue of predestination, but in the very next chapter, Romans 10:13 he writes, **“Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”** Which implies the choice is ours.

The reason I believe both seemingly contradictory doctrines is because the Bible teaches them both!

And it makes no attempt at reconciling the mystery!

It's like me holding up a quarter between us, and asking you to describe what you see. You'll say, **“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 different angles.

And this is the case with salvation.

God commands us to choose. From our perspective it's all up to us - our salvation depends on our free will.

But once we choose we realize that before the world began God chose us and predestined us to be saved.

Once a wise man commented on the doctrine of election. He said, **“Long ago I settled this 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 suggests when we enter heaven engraved on the gate will be, **“Whosoever will may come.”** But once we enter,

and look at the inside of the gate, we'll see, "Chosen before the foundation of the world."

I'll never forget coming home from work one day and finding a jar in the floor of our kitchen with a lid lying nearby. The label read, "Warning, biological material, teratogenic and mutagenic agents present!" *I panicked.*

I thought, "*Oh no, the boys have been out in the woods, and they've brought a poisonous canister into the house! We're contaminated!*" But Kathy calmed my fears. The jar, with the ominous 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, while the other goes 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 that the two ropes were actually one rope strung over a pulley above the tiles.

I think this is what we'll find when we get to heaven.

We assume that our free will and God's sovereignty are at odds. In reality they work hand and hand. *There is no contradiction after all* - a higher logic known only to God is at work reconciling the truths of our salvation.

We should take to heart, Isaiah 55:8-9, it tells us, "**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 I once heard, “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 seems to be irreconcilable doctrines*) and it does it for a reason. It’s a reminder to haughty humans that we don’t know more than God. Especially when it comes to 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 owe us an explanation. 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. They’d always been heirs of salvation, *but now they weren’t the folks getting saved*. Gentiles were coming to Christ.

And as a result, some people were accusing 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?* And to answer their question Paul brings up several OT passages that predicted this flip-flop - *salvation to Gentiles and judgment on 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 their "favored nation status."

In essence, the Hebrew nation was placed on suspension - and God signed a new player to fill the roster spot - *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 Messiah in the same place they rejected Him.

Verse 27, **Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel** (Here 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. Revelation tells us God will pour out plagues and ravage planet Earth for two reasons: 1) **to punish the wicked**, and 2) **to purify the Jew**.

Isaiah calls the Jewish survivors of Great Tribulation, *“the remnant.”* There’re the ones who’ll be saved.

“And as Isaiah said before: (Here he quotes 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 refused to wipe out the Jews. He judged them for a season, but 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! *Take a football game...*

The quarterback throws a pass that bounces off the hands of the intended receiver, and it gets caught by a bystander, who takes it in for the winning score.

This is the story of our salvation!

The Jews were the intended target - the Gentiles just jogging downfield. The Jews reached for the ball, but the Gentiles - in the right place at the right time - caught the carom, with nothing but faith, 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. Gentiles had nothing of merit. They knew they were underserving. *All they had was faith.*

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.**” And Paul 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 prophesied in Psalm 118 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 would lean!* 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 Jewish people were the most religious folks on the planet. Yet Paul, one of their own, declares that the Jews weren't even saved.

This would be like me saying the Pope isn't saved.

I've been to the Vatican in Rome. It's a bastion of religion. Round the clock liturgies are *read* and prayers are *said*. Candles and incense burn like a forest fire...

Whether the Pope is actually saved is between him and God, but the point Paul makes of the Jews *is true of the Pope* - **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 Jewish neighborhood dressed immodestly, and the residents will want to 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 they 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 it's 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 up and you were breaking the whole enchilada.

Here's the problem living under 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 obtaining righteousness.

Verse 6, “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... *They may get you places on earth, but they 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 *supposedly spiritual people* who wear crystals, and chant mantras. They've have all sorts of metaphysical feelers out - looking for God.

I have a friend who wasn't content with Christianity.

He had to go *deeper - always deeper* - into the next weird spiritual novelty. The last time I spoke to him, he was into the Jewish Kabbalah. I wrote him the following thought, “*The deepest thought I've ever heard is - Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!*”

Paul is saying here that 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 ask...

“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 goodness, nor *wielding* mystical powers.

It’s simply *yielding* control of your life to Jesus!

It’s not *flexing my muscle*, or *straining my brain* - its *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*. Verse 11 reads, “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...

Verse 13, “For “*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*” Have you called on His name?

The emphasis in Chapter 9 was God’s sovereignty in salvation - *it’s up to Him!* But here in Chapter 10 *it’s all up to us...* Notice, again in back-to-back chapters the Bible teaches both perspectives, *as it does throughout*.

Someone might come to church while I’m teaching Romans 9 and think I believe in predestination... *and they would be right...* Then come back the next week and hear me teach Romans 10, and think I adhere to man’s free will... *and they*

would be right. *Did the guy completely change his theology over one week?* No.

The Bible teaches both God's election and human responsibility, but it doesn't reconcile these doctrines.

God asks me to believe these truths, not reconcile them. *God chooses and we have a choice.* How they work together I don't know, but I trust that they do.

It's amazing how these two doctrines - though irreconcilable in theory - work out so well in practice.

If someone complains to me, **"This isn't fair, God didn't choose me?"** I'll reply, *"How do you know?"*

He'll probably say, **"Well, I'm not a Christian."** To which I can respond, *"Why aren't you a Christian? The Bible says whosoever will may come."* He'll likely fire back, **"Yes, but I'm not sure I want to come?"** And my reply, *"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."** I believe God revealed to us the doctrine of election to provide us as *a comfort, not a cop-out.*

The first half of Romans 10 spoke of **the simplicity of salvation**, now the second half speaks of **the serious of evangelism**. God made salvation simple, attainable, and available. Now it's our job to spread the news!

And Paul 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 can be *believed* it first 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, so I'll just 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!*

It's said, “Too many Christians are like the Arctic river, frozen over at the mouth.” *Don't let that be you!*

Recall Romans 2 taught us we all get judged by the light we receive. That being true, you might think, “Why take the Gospel to the pygmy and risk his rejection? He's not accountable for what he doesn't know, so just don't tell him. Ignorance is bliss.” But here's the problem... Nobody faithfully lives up to the truth they've been shown. *Has the pygmy ever violated his conscience and done an evil deed? Yes, and because of it he needs to be saved; thus he needs the Gospel.*

Even if God were willing to save a repentant, trusting pagan, *how many repentant pagans are there?*

When that pygmy invites you over for dinner he's not necessarily being nice! You might be on the menu. *Ignorance is **not** bliss.* Everybody needs forgiveness and transformation, and it is 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, in fact.* But no one has ever commented on my feet... **Only God praises feet!**

Feet are God's favorite human feature. Especially, when he sees a pair of feet carrying the Gospel. He sees them as objects of beauty! All husbands admire their wives, and Jesus is no exception. The bridegroom looks at His bride, the Church, 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 his prophecy, 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 - the Bible compared to man's gimmicks, is the wheat 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 this verse, Romans 10:17.

He got up from his knees, opened His Bible, and started reading. 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*. God intended to bless the Gentiles in Christ to make the Jews jealous and turn back to Him.

*"But Isaiah (Chapter 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, but it was despite God's constant pleadings. God called to them, but they turned their backs on Him. *So, is God through with the Jews?* We'll answer that question in Romans 11...