

Our Responsibility (Isaiah 28:14-16 and Romans 9:30:10-21)

26-May-2024

Isaiah 28:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers
who rule this people in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death,
with the realm of the dead we have made an agreement.

When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by,
it cannot touch us,

for we have made a lie our refuge
and falsehood our hiding place."

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.

Romans 9:30-10:21

Israel's Unbelief

³⁰ What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. ³³ 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."

10 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³ Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

⁵ Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." ⁶ 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) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ 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: ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. ¹⁸ 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.”

¹⁹ 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.”

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.”

²¹ But concerning Israel he says,
“All day long I have held out my hands
to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

Sermon: God's Sovereign Choice

Please turn your Bible to **Romans chapter 9** – starting at verse 30 – and we're going through to **chapter 10 verse 21**. There is an outline if you would like to take down some notes!

Let me **pray** first...

Recap/Intro

Just a **recap** on **last week** – we said

[Slide-Recap]

The apostle **Paul** had **great sorrow and unceasing anguish** (9:2) because the people of Israel **have mostly rejected Jesus**.

Paul is so upset by this – he even says that he's **prepared to be cut-off from Jesus** (9:3) – and wind up in **Hell** – rather than **Heaven** – if it will mean that the **people of Israel would be saved for Heaven**.

Paul then went on to explain that the reason that **the people of Israel** mostly missed **who Jesus** – and rejected **Jesus** – is all down to - **God's sovereign choice**.

Paul said, **God knew they would mostly reject Jesus** – because **God actually foretold it in His Word**. And **His Word never fails** – and **God always keeps His promises**. And we said last week – **God is not unjust** – and we shouldn't talk back to God – because **He is the sovereign creator** and **we are just His creatures** (**God is the potter and we are His clay**).

[Slide-Contradiction]

Now this week – in chapter 9:30 to 10:21 – **Paul is going to tell us that Israel's unbelief is down to human responsibility.**

Paul is a very **intelligent man** – so if he said last week unbelief is down to **God's sovereign choice** – and now this week he's saying – unbelief is down to **human responsibility**. We need to give Paul a bit of credit that he's not contradicting himself.

How do we explain this **apparent contradiction**?

The Bible never says: A particular event totally happened in accordance with God's plan without human beings being responsible for their actions.

Nor does the Bible say: human beings were responsible for their actions; therefore, the event was not certain to happen according to God's plan.

Rather the Bible holds both these truths together

A. The complete sovereignty of God over all history – AND

B. The complete responsibility of every human being for his or her own behaviour

Martin Lloyd-Jones explains it this way:

No-one would be saved were it not that God in a sovereign manner had chosen them, as explained in Romans 9:6-29. It's God's actions that saves a person.

So why is it that some people are lost and not saved? Is it because they are not chosen? No! People are lost and not saved because of their rejection of Jesus.

People are responsible for their rejection of Jesus, but people are not responsible for their acceptance of Jesus, that's down to God!

Basically, there is a tension between God's sovereign choice and human responsibility. We are not meant to fully understand that tension – we just need to accept it!

(pause)

Paul goes on to explain how **the people of Israel** are responsible for their unbelief. Just like the **people of Israel** had a responsibility to believe in Jesus - that responsibility is ours too!

[Slide-Headings]

So, we're going to look at our responsibility under 5 headings

1. It's our responsibility – *to be righteous* (9:30-33)
2. It's our responsibility – *to have zeal with the correct knowledge* (10:1-4)
3. It's our responsibility – *to demonstrate genuine faith in Jesus* (10:5-13)
4. It's our responsibility – *to hear, understand and accept the good news of Jesus* (10:16-21)
5. And it's our responsibility – *to be beautiful feet!* (10:14-15)

1. It's our responsibility – to be righteous (9:30-33)

1st then – it's our responsibility – *to be righteous* – that's in chapter 9 – vv30-33

To be **righteous** is to be right with God and approved by God!

[Slide-righteous]

Paul says – v30 – that the **Gentiles** didn't pursue righteousness – but they **obtained it through faith in Jesus!**

Whereas – v31 – the people of Israel pursued God's Law to get righteousness – but didn't obtain it – because no-one can keep God's Law perfectly – except Jesus!

Paul's point – v32 – is that people are right with God and approved by God – through faith in Jesus – not by working for it!

And so, when God sent Jesus to give people the opportunity to be righteous - by believing in Jesus – most of Israel - didn't receive or believe Him!

Because - Paul says – Jesus was like a stumbling stone to Israel

How did Israel stumble over Jesus?

There's a **few ways**:

- When Jesus came as the Messiah – the people of Israel were **expecting a military King** – like King David – **who would kick out the Romans**. They were not expecting a suffering servant king who was a spiritual saviour!
- Also, Jesus often criticized the religious leaders and challenged their interpretation of God's law; and their over reliance on man-made rules and traditions, and He exposed their hypocrisy. Most of the religious leaders felt that Jesus was threatening their status!
- Also, **Jesus' teaching on**: repentance; forgiveness; loving one's enemies; turning the other cheek – and His teaching that doing good on the Sabbath is okay – and that salvation is by faith – and that there is a cost in following Him – were too much for most people!

- The idea of the Messiah being crucified was also **scandalous and an offence to the people of Israel!**
- Jesus' inclusion of tax-collectors, prostitutes, lepers and outcasts in His Kingdom – and His offer of salvation to non-Jewish people – were also too much to handle!

It's no different today – people still stumble over Jesus!

- Many don't believe in God today – let alone God sending His Son Jesus to save people!
- Jesus' moral and ethical teaching on things like sexual purity, forgiveness, and letting go of sinful behaviour – don't go down well with a society that says "whatever makes you feel okay – do it"
- Jesus' exclusive claim that He "***is the way, the truth and the life***" is an **offence to a pluralistic society** that says "all roads lead to paradise or Heaven". Jesus' claim is offensive to other religions like: Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam!
- **Some people object to anything supernatural** – like a **virgin giving birth** to Jesus; and His **miracles** and His **resurrection** – all fly in the face of scientific reason!
- Some people object to there being a **God who allows suffering in the world**
- Some people may have had a **bad experience of Christianity** – either in a **church setting** – or from an **individual** – and so they **view Christians as hypocrites**

- Many people today operate under a **cancel culture (or wokeness)** where **traditional Christian values and Jesus' teaching are frowned upon**. How dare Christians speak against - things like: same sex-marriage and sexual impurity – and having more than two genders?

Paul's point is – our responsibility is - to be righteous – and for that - **we need Jesus!**

2. It's our responsibility – to have zeal with the correct knowledge (10:1-4)

2nd – our responsibility is – **to have zeal with the correct knowledge** – that's **chapter 10 – verses 1 to 4**

Paul express a **wonderful desire and prayer** for his people to be saved!

We can have that **same prayer** for our nation too – can't we?

[Slide-Zeal]

The problem for most of the people of Israel is they **had zeal for God** but without the correct knowledge

They thought **they could work their way to be right with God** following the **commandments** – which they couldn't fully obey

They thought **they could make themselves righteous** – they were **self-righteous**
But- **only Jesus** – v4 - who is the fulfilment and culmination of the law - **can make them right with God**

An example of zeal for God without correct knowledge is **Paul himself before he became a Christian and Apostle**. Paul was a very religious man, a Pharisee,
followed the details of the law meticulously – but – **Paul didn't believe Jesus was**

God's Promised Messiah – and Paul thought Jesus was a liar and a blasphemer!

Paul in fact, **persecuted Christians** – he was very zealous about that – to the point that he **went from town to town - to round up Christians and put them in jail** – even having some killed! Paul thought **he was doing God a favour in getting rid of Christians.** But **he had zeal without the correct knowledge?**

For us – we could fall into the same trap – and be so zealous about God's laws/commandments – that we end up being - **judgmental** – even **fanatical!**

For example, we might **insist on what people can and cannot do on the Sabbath (Sunday)** or **insist on what mode of Baptism is correct** or **what version of the Bible to read** or **how frequent we celebrate the Lord's Supper.**

We might also **have a real zeal for the Bible** – and **be able to quote chapter and verse** – but **we don't apply the teaching from the Bible to our lives.**

Or we could – **read our Bibles religiously** – but **fail to understand** – that all the Old Testament (OT) points to our Lord Jesus and **that every saviour type figure in OT points to Jesus.** And all the sacrifices for sin in OT **point to Jesus as the once and for all sacrifice.** And that the temple [dwelling place of Go] in OT **points to Jesus as the true temple and dwelling place of God!**

Paul's point is - **we must have a zeal for Jesus** - with **the correct knowledge of** - who He is and why He came!

3. It's our responsibility – to demonstrate genuine faith in Jesus (10:5-13)

3rd – our responsibility is – to demonstrate genuine faith in Jesus – that's in chapter 10 – vv5-13

[Slide-genuine faith]

Paul argues in v5 – Moses told the Israelites that anyone who insists on using the God's law to live right before God **soon discovers it's not so easy**—every detail of life regulated by fine print! And besides, as we've already said, no-one can obey the law completely.

Instead, Paul says – v6 – **righteousness comes by faith** – and we don't need to ascend to Heaven where Jesus is to get right with God – nor – v7 – do we need to go to the dead and rescue Jesus from the dead to be right with God either.

Instead v8 – those who believe – **have the word of Jesus in their mouths and hearts.**

And it's a matter of simply demonstrating genuine faith in Jesus.

As a Christian, our responsibility is:

V9 – to declare with our **mouth** – Jesus is Lord – that is He is the boss of our lives – not us! And believe in our **heart** that God raised Jesus from the dead.

And - V10 – by believing with our heart – we are **justified** – Paul says – which means we're **found not guilty of our sins** and will not be punished for them. And **we are to profess our genuine faith in Jesus with our mouths – and we will be saved for Heaven.**

From this we can see that **genuine faith requires not keeping our faith secret but being prepared to go public with it – and - not being ashamed to say we are Christians.**

If we love someone – **we don't stop talking about them – do we?**

It should be the same for us - if we love Jesus – **we'll mention it to people – not hide it!**

That's Paul's point – in v11 – anyone who believes in Jesus – **will not be put to shame – they won't blush, be embarrassed or humiliated or regret believing in Jesus!**

And even though Paul's lamenting that the people of Israel have missed out on Jesus. He points out in v12 – ***Jesus is Lord of all – both Jews and Gentiles*** – and so - v13 – ***everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!***

Jesus is available to ALL!

Maybe there is someone here this morning **who doesn't believe in Jesus.**

God's Word promises you – ***if you call on the name of the Lord, you will be saved!***

4. It's our responsibility – to hear, understand and accept the good news of Jesus **(10:16-21)**

4th – it's our responsibility – **to hear, understand and accept the Good News of Jesus** – that's in chapter 10 – vv16-21.

[Slide-hear Good News]

In these verses **Paul explains how the Israelites failed in this responsibility.** He says:

- **Isaiah even predicted the Israelites would not believe the good news – v16**
- **Paul says - people must hear the word of Christ so they can have faith – v17**
- **V18 - Paul quotes King David from Psalm 19 saying the voice of all the messengers of God went to the ends of the Earth – and is still going out today – so no-one can use the excuse that they haven't heard the word**
- **Paul says - God even predicted – through Moses – v19 – that other nations [Gentiles] would believe and make the people of Israel envious/jealous**
- **To the point that – v20 – people who didn't even seek Jesus, found him – and Jesus was revealed to people who did not ask for Jesus. This is what happens when missionaries go to different countries and share the Good News of Jesus**
- **Meanwhile – v21 – the Israelites – have failed to accept Jesus – even though as Paul says – quoting from Isaiah – God has held out His hand to them – but they were disobedient and obstinate – and gave Jesus the cold-shoulder!**

What was true for the Israelites – is true today.

Many today – refuse to believe and accept the Good News of Jesus

Even though missionaries have brought the Good News of Jesus to the ends of the Earth!

And it's also true today – that many Gentile nations around the world - have believed in Jesus – but most of the people of Israel still today are disobedient and obstinance. And Paul's prayer for his people still stands!

5. And it's our responsibility – to be beautiful feet (10:14-15)

5th – it's our responsibility – **to be beautiful feet** – that's vv14-15

[Slide-beautiful feet]

Paul reasons that it's our responsibility **to take the Good News of Jesus to people**

He reasons – how can people call on Jesus if they have not believed?

He reasons – **people can't believe** in Jesus if they haven't heard about Him

He reasons – **people can't hear unless** someone preaches the Good News to them

And for someone to preach to them – **they have to be sent**

Then he quotes from Isaiah 52:7 - ***How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!***

WE are **those beautiful feet** bringing the **good news**

Application – how can we be beautiful feet?

We're **only limited** by our imagination – here's some **suggestions**

- Through **genuine intentional faith-based compassionate conversations** with family, friends and work colleagues
- Through us **living a Christian life** – being a great **witness/example**
- **Praying for unbelievers** to come to know Jesus
- **Online** – FB, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, vlogs and podcasts
- **Mercy ministries** (like P.A.T.)
- One on one **discipleship**
- **Christianity Explained, Discovery Bible Studies**
- **Teaching children** – Scripture in schools, Friday and Sunday Jaffa

- Hospitality
- Communications Corner ministries we have [Art, Craft, Movies, Tech Savvy]
- Evangelism (Canton Beach)
- Distributing Bibles and Tracts
- Sending out missionaries

Conclusion

This passage leaves us with **two** clear truths:

[Slide-Conclusion]

- Every human being is responsible for how they treat the “Word of Christ”
- Every Christian is responsible for communicating that “Word of Christ”.

We must ensure that, wherever it is that God has placed us, no one around us can say they have not heard or understood – why they need Jesus!

Let's pray...

Father God, thank you that because of your grace and mercy in sending your Son Jesus to deal with sin and death; we can be right with you!

Help us to have a zeal for you, your Word and your Son.

Help us to demonstrate our faith in Jesus!

And grant us opportunities to be those beautiful feet that bring the Good News that says – Jesus is the way to Heaven, that He is the truth, and that He gives eternal life. In His name, we pray. Amen!