

Romans Part 2

How to be a Christian without Being Religious!

Lesson 3: Israel's Rejection of the Gospel! (Romans 10:1-13)

Many people ask, "Why do the Jews not believe that Jesus is their Messiah?" Great question! The apostle Paul, self-proclaimed "Hebrew of Hebrews," was more concerned about this particular issue than any Gentile (Philippians 3:5). In Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul responds to this Jewish problem. These three chapters are included in Paul's letter to the believers in Rome to help them understand why there was widespread Jewish unbelief which, by the way, continues to be prevalent to this day. John Stott writes,

Chapters 9 - 11 of Romans all address the problem of Jewish unbelief. In chapter 9 the emphasis was on God's purpose according to election; the emphasis of chapter 10, however, is on the human factors, on the need for an understanding of the gospel (5-13), for the proclamation of the gospel (14-15), and for the response of faith (16-21). With chapter 10 Paul turns from the past to the present, from his explanation of the Israelites' unbelief to his hope that they will yet hear and believe the gospel. This vision for the future he will elaborate further in chapter 11.¹

Understand that there are many Jews around the world today who believe that Jesus is the Messiah. But, the vast majority of Jews are still blinded by their stubborn hearts. Likewise, the vast majority of Gentiles are blinded by their stubborn hearts. In this lesson, we will uncover and explain what it means to truly believe and why unbelief stems from the refusal of people to embrace the gospel.

Paul loved his fellow Jewish brothers and wanted nothing more than for them to be saved. In chapter 9, verses 2-3, Paul writes, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race." It is amazing to consider the extent of Paul's love the Jews. He was willing to forfeit his own salvation in exchange for redemption of the Jewish race. God feels the same love for the Israelites, just as He does for all people. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 says, "God our Savior... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." This is God's desire. So, why do so many refuse to come to God on His terms? Let's see!

The Jews were zealous to know God, but according to Paul, their zeal was not based on knowledge. In other words, their pursuit of God was not based on true knowledge of the only way to have a right relationship with God. Thus, they sought their own way. This is what people do all over the world. Instead of coming to God on His terms, people from diverse nations and religions attempt to come to God on their own terms. They try to establish their own righteousness by way of their own "so-called" good works. It is important to understand that every religion, outside of biblical Christianity, is based on works. Stott writes,

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 279.

This ignorance of the true way, and this tragic adoption of the false way, are by no means limited to Jewish people. They are widespread among religious people of all faiths, including professing Christians. All human beings, who know that God is righteous and they are not..., naturally look around for a righteousness which might fit them to stand in God's presence. There are only two possible options before us. The first is to attempt to build or establish our own righteousness, by our good works and religious observances. [This is what so many church members in America do!!] But this is doomed to failure, since in God's sight even 'all our righteous acts are like filthy rags' (Is. 64:6). The other way is to submit to God's righteousness by receiving it from him as a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ.²

True righteousness before God can come only from God, not from human beings. This is the main point that Paul makes in Romans 1:17: "For in the gospel a righteousness *from* God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith." Throughout Romans, Paul explains that righteousness comes from God as a gift to those who truly believe. His main theme is the gospel—the good news to the world that righteousness from God is available to all who truly believe in Him. The theological term for God's gift of righteousness to those who believe is known as *imputed righteousness*—a righteousness from God that is ascribed to men and women the moment they truly believe. This is what happened to the thief on the cross the moment Jesus saw faith born in his heart! Faith in Christ is the only way to stand righteous before God.

In verse 4, Paul writes, "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." It is important to understand what is meant by the phrase "Christ is the end of the law." This does not mean that the law no longer matters. It does matter. God still wants us to keep the law. The problem is we can't. No one can. Romans 3:10 and 20 state, "There is no one righteous, not even one... Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." If we honestly look at the Ten Commandments, we all must admit that we have broken most, if not all, of them. But, here is the good news of the gospel! Jesus brought an end to the law in the sense that the law is no longer the way of getting right with God. All people, whether Jew or Gentile, get right with God by faith, by believing the gospel. That is the one way God provided, and this one path is available to every person who has ever been born. Genesis 15:6 states, "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

There is really only one way to come to God—you must be perfect. And there are only two ways to be perfect in God's sight: Either 1) by perfectly keeping the law your entire life, or 2) by imputed righteousness that comes by faith. Paul quotes Moses to make this point, "The man who does these things will live by them" (10:5) The way to God is to obey the Law in its entirety without fail. You must be perfect! Have you been able to be perfect? No! But since that is impossible, God, in his mercy, has provided another path—the path of faith, which Paul describes in verse 6 as "the righteousness that is by faith." So, how can one obtain this faith in Christ Jesus? Must a person go to heaven to find Him? No! He has already come from heaven in search of us! Must someone bring Jesus back from the dead? No! He is risen! So, what must one do? Hear the word! Listen to the Gospel! This word of truth is near to you! It is near to everyone! It has been preached to the whole world since the days of the apostles, and it is still proclaimed

² Ibid., 281.

today! All you have to do is hear it! And, once you hear it, you must believe. Romans 10:9 and 10 contain the proper response of every true believer: “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” Stott writes,

The gospel...is neither remote nor unavailable. There is no need to ask who will ascend to heaven to bring Christ down or descend to Hades to bring Christ up...For Christ has come and died, and been raised, and is therefore immediately accessible to faith. We do not need to do anything. Everything that is necessary has already been done. Moreover, because Christ himself is near, the gospel of Christ is also near. It is in the heart and mouth of every believer. The whole emphasis is on the close, ready, easy accessibility of Christ and his gospel.³

Salvation and justification are, in essence, the same thing. To be justified before God is to be ‘declared righteous’ by Him the moment He sees true belief in a person’s heart. The moment you are justified, that is, legally declared righteous, you are also saved from hell and eternal damnation. Now, that is good news! Understand that to “confess with your mouth” and “to believe in your heart” are two sides of the same coin. These two verses cannot be separated. Confession and belief must go hand in hand. The acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord always flows from a heart that truly believes in Him. And “anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame” (verse 11). The NASV translates the word “shame” as “disappointed,” which is probably a more accurate translation and, personally, makes more sense. Anyone who comes to Jesus by faith will never be disappointed. Salvation, forgiveness, grace and mercy all accrue to the one who truly believes in Him. No condemnation! No shame! No disappointments! Eternal life! Joy! Peace! Real contentment! Hope! Plus, a lasting relationship with the very One who offers eternal life is given to those who trust in Him!

Finally, there is no difference for Jew or Gentile, for black or white, for rich or poor. All must come the one way that God has provided, and He promises to bless everyone who calls on the name of the Lord: “*For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*” (Verse 13). How can anyone turn down this offer? Have you truly responded by faith? Or, are you still counting on your church membership and good deeds to win favor with God? The choice is yours! All you have to do is believe. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Come to Jesus now and receive from Him supernatural rest for your weary soul!

³ Ibid., 284.

DAY 1

1. Read chapter 8 pages 89-92 from *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*.
 - a. According to Ridenour, “God is not on trial. He runs the world according to His will. He is sovereign. We are His creation. Therefore, we have no business _____ our creator. We are not to be critics of God. He is our critic. We are not to put God on trial. He alone is the supreme Judge. Each one of us must stand his or her own trial” (89). Explain:
 1. How does this make you feel toward God?
 2. How did God provide a way to satisfy his justice and provide a way to be merciful to the whole world (Romans 3:24-26; 1 Peter 1:18-20)?
 - b. Ridenour writes, “The problem is never with a holy God but with sinful man” (89). Explain:
 - c. Ridenour writes, “Since God is loving and merciful... the miracle is not that God rejects sinful men... but that He has not yet destroyed the world” (89).
 1. How does this make you feel toward God?
 2. How did God provide a way to satisfy his justice and provide a way to be merciful to the whole world (Romans 3:24-26; 1 Peter 1:18-20)?

DAYS 2 and 3

Read Romans 10:1-4

2. Verse 1 states, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”
 - a. The Israelites (Jews) were the most religious people on the planet, so why did Paul feel the need to pray for them that they might be saved?

- b. Concerning the Jews' lack of salvation, what does this have to say about religious striving (Romans 2:20)?

 - c. Can you see how Gentiles make the same error? Explain:
3. Dr. M.R. De Haan (1891 – 1965) founded the Radio Bible Class, a worldwide ministry of radio, literature, and television. In addition, he was a physician as well as co-editor of *Our Daily Bread*, a daily devotional. De Haan writes,

Ye Must Be Born Again!

From a religious, moral, or ethical standpoint, Nicodemus towered over others like Saul of old physically stood head and shoulders above the rest of the people...In John 3:1 we are told that he was a Pharisee. Today we associate this term with hypocrisy, but originally, and in Jesus' day, there was no such connotation. The Pharisees were a religious party, originating in the silent years between the close of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ. Because this party arose as a protest to the growing unbelief and infidelity in the nation of Israel, it was first of all a revival movement. These people gave themselves to the defense of the Scriptures and the traditions of the fathers and gradually they rose in power. Their standards of membership were progressively narrowed down, until to be a Pharisee in the days of Jesus meant that one had passed very rigorous tests both for orthodoxy and education. The people looked to the Pharisees for their teaching of the Scriptures and interpretations of the traditions of the fathers, and to this party Nicodemus belonged. He was the very flower of religious correctness; yet to this man Jesus spoke the words, "Ye must be born again."⁴

- a. Read Acts 22:1-3; Galatians 1:14, and Philipians 3:4-6. Explain how the Jews were zealous for God.

⁴ M.R. De Haan, M.D., *Ye Must Be Born Again*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Radio Bible Class, 1972), 3.

b. Read John 3:1-12.

1. What was Nicodemus' real spiritual problem?

2. In verses 5 and 6, Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." Jesus was trying to explain to Nicodemus that there are two births. Explain what Jesus meant by two births:

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:14. Why did Nicodemus not understand what Jesus meant, and why do so many of today's churchgoers not really understand what it means to be "born again?"

De Haan continues,

There is a common notion among professing Christians that the new birth is needed by only a certain class of individuals. They think that since the new birth is a radical, life-changing experience, it is only for those who have tasted the bitter dregs of sin, and those who have fallen into the depths of corruption, immorality, and wickedness. They admit that these people need a revolutionary change in their lives, the experience which we call the new birth. But they imply by their very statement that others do not need this tremendous experience. If one has been born in a Christian home, they tell us, and has been sprinkled, goes to church and Sunday school, and lives a good, religious, morally clean life, he does not need to be born again. They say that such a person has always been a Christian, and that all he needs is to be religious and law-abiding, observe the rituals and subscribe to the doctrines of the church he attends, and surely he will be saved. But my Bible says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These words were not spoken to an irreligious, wicked blasphemer, but to the very highest example of religious perfection in the day of our blessed Lord.

If Nicodemus lived today, he would undoubtedly be an outstanding theologian of the present generation. He would probably be honored with the highest office in the religious world...Remember, he was a master [teacher] of Israel and a ruler of the Jews (as a member of the Sanhedrin). He would probably be the author of many scholarly volumes

of theological dissertations on the great and weighty doctrines of Scripture, for Jesus said to Nicodemus, “You are Israel’s teacher and do you not understand these things?” Yet this man to whom Jesus was speaking was not saved, and our Savior said to him, “Ye must be born again.”

Nicodemus was not a hypocrite. In addition to being religious, moral, refined, and cultured, he was also an honest man. He was sincere—but sincerely wrong. Every one of us ought to be moral and educated and refined and law-abiding, and above all, believers in Christ. But Nicodemus made the mistake of thinking that these fine qualities were sufficient without the new birth. How many today labor under the same delusion and snare of religion? They do not have the new birth as a real, definite experience in their lives! They believe that going to church, saying their prayers, reading their Bibles, even studying the Bible, practicing the Golden Rule, and trying to keep the law is enough; yet they neglect the necessity of the new birth through personal faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Our Savior, however, brushes all this aside when He says to this moral, religious, law-abiding, Bible-studying, praying, sincere religionist, “Ye must be born again.”⁵

4. What are one or two new ideas you have learned from reading the above text by Dr. De Haan?

5. Are you offended by anything he writes? If yes, why?

6. Do you understand the new birth? Have you truly been born again?

4. How does one submit to God’s righteousness (Romans 1:16-17; 3:22; 10:4, 9-10)?

⁵ Ibid., 2-5.

DAYS 4 and 5 Read Romans 10:5-13

5. Verse 8 states, “But what does it say? ‘The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,’ that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming.”
 - a. Read Deuteronomy 30:9-14. In Deuteronomy 30, Moses gives his last words to the Israelites before he dies and is buried by God (Deuteronomy 34:1-6), and before the Israelites finally enter the Promised Land after wandering in the desert for 40 years. What did Moses say was “very near” them?
 - b. What did Moses mean by “the word?” (See verse 10.)
 - c. What slightly different idea did Paul have when he referred to “the word” in Romans 10:8? What phrase does he use to describe “the word?”
 - d. How would you define “the word of faith?” (See verses 9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Romans 1:16, 15:16 and 20.)
 - e. Explain how the gospel is near to everyone? [Hint: R.C. Sproul writes, “Understanding the gospel does not require a Ph.D. in theology...The gospel is ‘near you,’ a Hebrew idiom meaning that it is within our grasp. It is right in front of us. The word of faith is simple.”]⁶
6. When the gospel is heard, what response should follow?
7. What does it mean to confess “Jesus is Lord?”
8. What does it mean to “believe in your heart?”

⁶ R.C. Sproul, *The Righteous Shall Live By Faith ROMANS*, (Wheaton Illinois: Crossway, 2009), 350.

9. Verse 13 states, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
 - a. Who may call on the name of the Lord?

 - b. What is promised to those who call on the name of the Lord?

 - c. Have you called on the name of the Lord? When did you do this, and how do you know it really happened?