

**~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:**

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, he did not, of course, write it in chapters and verses. He didn't intend that it would be read in short segments over 16 days, as we are doing. Rather, it was meant to be read in its entirety in one sitting. The danger we face by reading one chapter each day is that we might overlook the context of each chapter within its surrounding chapters. Surely that danger exists when we read these later chapters in Romans.

Calvinists, in particular, often lift verses from their context in these latter chapters of Romans to make them mean something that they don't actually mean. Notice, however, that the obvious theme of chapter 10, just like chapter 9, is God's acceptance of Gentile believers and His rejection of Jewish unbelievers. Keeping that context in mind is essential. Calvinists who claim that Paul teaches in Romans that salvation is limited to those whom God has sovereignly preselected need to read everything Paul wrote in Romans, not just isolated verses. Salvation is offered to all:

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (10:12-13).

Although I didn't mention it when we read chapter 9 (having run out of my allotted words), Paul concluded that chapter by explaining why it was not God's fault that Jews were a minority in the church by AD 55. Quoting Hosea and Isaiah, he showed that God had predicted centuries before that there would be a great influx of Gentiles into His kingdom combined with only a small remnant of Jews. And the reason? It was because so many Gentiles believed God's Word, receiving the gift of righteousness by faith, while the majority of Jews pursued righteousness by their works (9:30-32). Even this God had foretold through Isaiah---The One whom He sent to be the Chief Cornerstone became a stone of stumbling to those who would not believe in Him. Those who would believe in Him, however, would not be disappointed (9:33).

This same theme continues in chapter 10 as Paul contrasts the "righteousness which is based on the law" and the "righteousness based on faith" (10:5-6). He first refers to Moses' words found in Leviticus 18:5: "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live [be saved] if he does them." That was God's promise to the Israelites, but since none of them ever kept the Law, none received the promised benefit. Rather, they inherited the Law's promised curse. Thus, the "righteousness which is based on law" (10:5) was unattainable and out of reach.

The righteousness based on faith, however, is quite attainable and accessible. Once more borrowing Moses' words (this time from Deuteronomy), Paul applied them to Christ and the gospel. There is no need to scale the heights of heaven to bring Christ down to us nor descend deep into the earth to bring Christ up to us (10:6-7). Jesus has already come to us, bringing salvation and righteousness as near as it can be. To obtain it, we need only to hear and believe "the word [or message] of faith" (10:8), that is, the gospel of righteousness through faith. That message offers righteousness to everyone who believes, Jew or Gentile (10:11-13). That righteousness is much more than just forgiveness and a righteous legal standing before God. It includes practical righteousness, the fruit of the indwelling Spirit.

Of course, if people are to believe the gospel, they must hear it from someone, and so this explains why God had sent so many preachers, something also foretold by Isaiah (10:15). By the time Paul wrote Romans, the gospel had spread far and wide, and multitudes of Gentiles had believed while most Jews had rejected it. God had foretold through Isaiah and Moses of the Gentile inclusion and the Jewish exclusion (10:19-21). But the Jewish rejection was not God's fault. Through His outstretched hands, he had continually extended his grace to Israel, but they rejected it.