



Romans 10:14-21 (ESV)

Israel's Rejection of the Message

¹⁴ But how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful^[a] are the feet of those^[b] who announce the gospel of good things!^[c] ¹⁶ But all did not obey the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message?^[d] ¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.^[e] ¹⁸ But I ask, “Did they not hear?” Yes, they did:

Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the inhabited world.^[f]

¹⁹ But I ask, “Did Israel not understand?” First, Moses said:

I will make you jealous
of those who are not a nation;
I will make you angry by a nation
that lacks understanding.^[g]

²⁰ And Isaiah says boldly:

I was found
by those who were not looking for Me;
I revealed Myself
to those who were not asking for Me.^[h]

²¹ But to Israel he says: All day long I have spread out My hands to a disobedient and defiant people.^[i]

Romans 10:14-21 (HCSB)

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English Standard Version Bible - *Study Bible*¹

Romans 10:14-21

10:14-15 **How then... ?** With a series of rhetorical questions, Paul considers the chain of events necessary for a person to be saved. [Verse 14](#) is linked to [v. 13](#) with the word **call**. The logic of these verses is clear: (1) People will call on Jesus to save them only if they believe he can do so; (2) belief in Christ cannot exist without knowledge about him; (3) one hears about Christ only when someone proclaims the saving message; and (4) the message about Christ will not be proclaimed unless someone is sent by God to do so. That is why Paul was so urgent about spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth, for he believed that the only way to be saved was to hear and believe in the gospel (see note on [1:19-20](#)). (Paul is not talking here about OT believers who looked forward to Christ, such as Abraham and David in [ch. 4](#), nor is he talking about infants who die in infancy; see note on [2 Sam. 12:23](#)). Since salvation comes only from hearing the gospel, the **feet** of those who bring the message about Christ are **beautiful** ([Isa. 52:7](#)), probably because the feet carry the messengers to their destinations.

10:16 Hearing the gospel is necessary for salvation, but hearing is not enough: people must also respond with personal trust. **Isaiah** ([Isa. 53:1](#)) prophesies that not all will believe. In the context of [Romans 9-11](#), Paul is thinking especially of the Jews who did not believe.

10:17 Paul now sums up the argument thus far. One can come to **faith** only through **hearing** the gospel, and the specific message that must be heard is the **word of Christ**, that is, the good news about Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Savior.

10:18-19 **They** who have heard the message probably refers to the Jewish people (see [vv. 1, 19-20](#)). Paul quotes [Ps. 19:4](#), which in its original context refers to general revelation, but Paul applies it to special revelation (the proclamation of the gospel) to emphasize that the Jews have heard the good news because the gospel has gone even **to the ends of the world** (i.e., to the Gentiles). Israel should have understood from the prophecy of [Deut. 32:21](#) that the Gentiles would believe.

10:20-21 The prophecy of [Isa. 65:1](#) has been fulfilled in that the Gentiles **who did not seek** after God have now experienced God's saving promises. Israel, on the other hand, has fulfilled the words of [Isa. 65:2](#). They have rebelled against and disobeyed the gospel message. Still, God extends his **hands** to them, inviting them to be saved. On the one hand, God predestines some to be saved. On the other hand, God still longs for all to be saved (see note on [1 Tim. 2:4](#); also [Ezek. 33:11](#)). Though it may seem impossible to understand how both of these statements are true, the Bible teaches both, and one should not use either truth to deny the other. On election, see also notes on [Eph. 1:4](#); [1:5](#); [1:6](#); [1:11](#).

1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 10".

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*²

Romans 10:14-21

10:14-15 What must occur for someone to call on the name of the Lord? Someone must first be sent to proclaim the gospel message, and then listeners must pay attention and believe. In the absence of any one of these factors, no one can call on the name of the Lord.

10:16-21 Paul quoted several OT passages to show that the conditions described in [verses 14-15](#) had been met for Israel. The gospel message was proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire. The Jews listened and simply did not believe. The Gentiles heard too, and many embraced it. Paul's citations show that the Gentile conversion was predicted in the OT. Ultimately, all peoples are **a disobedient and defiant people**. Israel was singled out in this way due to their consistent rejection of God's message and messengers (see [Ac 7:51-60](#)).

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Romans 10:14-21

10:14 In telling others about Christ, an effective witness must include more than being a good example. Eventually, we will have to explain the content, the *what* and the *how* of the gospel. Modeling the Christian life is important, but we will need to connect the mind of the unbeliever and the message of the gospel. There should never be a debate between those who favor lifestyle evangelism (one's living proclaims the gospel) and confrontational evangelism (declaring the message). Both should be used together in promoting the gospel.

10:15 We must take God's great message of salvation to others so that they can respond to the Good News. How will your loved ones and neighbors hear it unless someone tells them? Is God calling you to take a part in making his message known in your community? Think of one person who needs to hear the Good News, and think of something you can do to help him or her hear it. Then take that step as soon as possible.

10:18-20 Many Jews who looked for the Messiah refused to believe in him when he came. God offered his salvation to the Gentiles ("people who were not looking for me"); thus, many Gentiles who didn't even know about a Messiah found and believed in him. Some religious people are spiritually blind, while those who have never been in a church are sometimes the most responsive to God's message. Because appearances are deceiving, and we can't see into people's hearts, beware of judging beforehand who will respond to the Good News and who will not.

2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., HCSB Study Bible, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 10".

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1913-1912.

Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary⁴

Romans 10:14-21

Salvation Is for Everyone / [10:5-21](#)

10:14-15 If God’s salvation is for anyone who calls, how can people **call** on God **to save them** if they have not been moved to **believe in him**? How can they believe **if they have never heard about him**? There can be no call, no belief, if these people have not heard about God (“heard” means a hearing that understands the significance of the words and realizes that a response is required), and been given the offer of salvation. And **how can they hear about him unless someone tells them**? There can be no call, no belief, no hearing, unless there are those **sent** to share the Good News.

All believers are sent to announce this Good News. The process of salvation begins with the one who tells another the Good News. Like Paul and the early Christians, who spread the message of Christ despite persecution and even death, we should be eager to share this Good News of salvation to all who will listen. In the verse quoted from [Isaiah 52:7](#), the herald is bearing **good news** to Judah about the end of their exile in Babylon and their return to their own land. His **feet** were **beautiful** to them, for his good news was so welcome. The message was what he brought, but it was those worn and dusty feet that brought him. Those feet were beautiful because they represented the messenger’s willingness to be sent with good news. Only now the message was not just for Israel, but for the whole world.

10:16 Many Jews did not welcome the gospel of Jesus Christ—they heard it but refused to believe and submit to it. The failure of Jews to respond to God’s warnings of impending judgment was true in Isaiah’s day, “**Lord, who has believed our message?**” It was true while Jesus preached ([John 12:37-41](#)), and it was true in Paul’s day. We can expect the same today. Bringing people good news does not guarantee a welcome. But having been changed by the message ourselves ought to change the way we see those who have not yet heard. We are not held responsible for how others respond, but we are expected to carry the Good News.

10:17 This statement expresses the main theme of this section. People need to hear the Good News of salvation in Christ in order to believe it ([10:14](#)). Faith does not respond in a vacuum or respond blindly. **Faith** is believing what one has been told about God’s offer of salvation and trusting the one who has been spoken about.

10:18 Some might argue that the Jews weren’t given enough chances to hear or that somehow the message should have been made clearer for them. Perhaps Isaiah’s complaint (“Who has believed?” [10:16](#)) was the fault of the messenger. But Paul emphatically responds that of course they heard. The message had been preached far and wide, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (see [1:16](#)). Then Paul quotes from [Psalm 19:4](#): “**The message of God’s creation has gone out to everyone, and its words to all the world.**” When Luke ended the book of Acts with Paul in Rome, this was probably considered a culmination of the great commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8](#)). At this time in history, the Good News had been preached to Jews and Gentiles for about twenty years, and it had spread throughout the Mediterranean areas where Jews lived. There may have been some Jews who truly

4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 616-617.

had not yet heard, but to use that as an excuse for the large number of Jews who had rejected the gospel did not sit well with Paul (see also [Romans 1:18-20](#)).

As the loopholes close for the Jews, they close for everyone else, too. If the Jews are not excused for their unbelief, how can the rest of us think there might be some excuse for us? In the end, some may wish they had heard more, but God will declare that what they heard was enough. In the meantime, those of us who have heard have little excuse for our apathy in passing on the Good News!

10:19 Someone might then argue, “Okay, so the Jews heard, but perhaps they didn’t **really understand** that God’s message was salvation not by the law, but by faith, and that it was for the Gentiles too.” Paul didn’t like that excuse either. The Jews’ knowledge of their own Scriptures should have led them to believe in Christ. He quotes again from their Scriptures to answer the argument. First, from [Deuteronomy 32:21](#): “**I will rouse your jealousy by blessing other nations. I will make you angry by blessing the foolish Gentiles.**” The Gentiles were not a single nation; they consisted of everyone who was not part of the Jewish nation. The Jews would be envious that God would offer salvation to the world at large and not just to his chosen people. They would be angry that the pagan peoples whom they considered to have no understanding would be accepted by God. In all of this, God’s purpose would not be to reject his people, but to cause them to return to him.

10:20 The second quote is from [Isaiah 65:1](#). The **people who were not looking for** God were the Gentiles. Although they had previously ignored God as simply the God of Israel and so had never sought him out, the Gentiles would recognize God as the one true God, and God would reveal himself to them.

10:21 Finally, from [Isaiah 65:2](#), Paul explains that God had been gracious to his people, patiently holding out his **arms** to them and calling them, only to have them disobey and argue with him. God’s invitation was spurned and his gifts were rejected.

The disobedience of Israel was judged by God’s welcome to the Gentiles (even though that was in his plan all along). But he will still accept his chosen people if they will only return to him. He remains faithful to his promises to his people, even though they have been unfaithful to him. God still holds out his arms.

Study and Discussion Questions

For Oct 10 - 24 (3 weeks)



Israel's Unbelief - [Romans 9:30-10:21](#)

Topics: [Desires](#), [Jesus Christ](#), [Law](#), [Righteousness](#), [Salvation](#), [Self-righteousness](#), [Unbelievers](#), [Zeal](#)

Open It

1. *When have you known someone who refused to listen to any advice or instruction?
2. How carefully do you follow the instruction sheet in a ready-to-assemble product?

Explore It

3. By what means have the Gentiles (non-Jews) obtained righteousness? ([9:30](#))
4. *What kept Israel from obtaining righteousness? ([9:31-32](#))
5. Over what has Israel stumbled? ([9:33](#))
6. What was Paul's greatest desire? ([10:1](#))
7. What positive trait did Paul recognize in the Israelites? ([10:2](#))
8. What had the Israelites done instead of submitting to God's righteousness? ([10:3-4](#))
9. What is the relationship between Christ and the Law in a person's pursuit of righteousness? ([10:4](#))
10. How did Moses describe righteousness that comes by the Law? ([10:5](#))
11. How does righteousness produced by faith come about? ([10:6-9](#))
12. What were the simple instructions Paul gave regarding personal salvation? ([10:9-10](#))
13. What promise is given to anyone who puts his or her faith in Christ? ([10:11](#))
14. *What distinctions did Paul note in the way that Jews and Gentiles obtain their salvation? ([10:12-13](#))
15. What does it take to get the message of God to someone? ([10:14-15](#))

16. How have the Israelites responded to hearing the message of God? ([10:16-18](#))
17. *How did Paul answer the argument that the Jews have not had adequate opportunity to hear God's message? ([10:18-21](#))
18. How had the response of the Gentiles to the message of God differed from the response of the Jews? ([10:18-21](#))

Get It

19. What makes it hard for Jews to believe Jesus Christ is the Messiah?
20. What hinders non-Jews from believing Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of the world?
21. *How can a person have great zeal for God or religious activities and yet be misguided?
22. What are the similarities and differences between a sports fanatic and a committed Christian?
23. How legitimate are claims by people who profess ignorance about Jesus' identity as Savior?
24. *What groups of people in our society resemble the unbelieving Jews of Paul's time?
25. Why is it essential to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead?
26. Why is both believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth important for salvation?

Apply It

27. *When could you spend extended time in prayer to bring before God those groups or peoples who have shown little interest in the gospel?
28. Who in your circle of friends and family needs to hear about God's plan of salvation? When?