

Romans

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Romans 10:14-21



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Vss. 14-15

- The last line of vs. 13 is drawn from Joel 2:32, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved!" But here Paul returns to his debate with his imaginary Jewish opponent, asking one rhetorical question after another to set up his point.
- Paul's point throughout the debate is that salvation is ultimately all about faith and trust. Salvation is not about the Law and keeping every little minute piece of it, as if you could earn enough credits whereby God owed you your salvation. No, salvation is found in faith in Christ and trust in His salvation.
- But Paul had been in so many synagogue debates he knew which objection was coming next. The first objection is, "Well no one ever told us this before! We couldn't know who Jesus was because no one told us about Him or His way of faith and trust". To which Paul says, "Right, you cannot call on God unless you believe in him. You cannot believe in him unless you hear about him. You cannot hear about him unless there is someone to proclaim the good news. There can be no one to proclaim the good news unless God commissions someone to do so." But Paul shoots down that objection by quoting Isaiah 52:7. There the prophet points out how welcome are those who bring the good news of good things. So Paul knocks down the first objection by essentially saying: "You cannot say there was no messenger. Isaiah describes these very messengers and he himself was one such messenger and Isaiah lived a long time ago. You have known the truth for centuries and yet denied it."

Vss. 16-17

- Indeed, Paul goes on to say that "in truth, Israel did not obey the good news given to them by Isaiah and the other prophets, even if your argument is true. Israel's failure was only to be expected as we see that centuries before Isaiah was broken hearted when he said, 'Lord, who has believed what we have heard?' (Isaiah 53:1). Everyone in Israel knew it was true that since the time of the prophets, they had not accepted the good news from God. Indeed, by the time of Christ, tradition had it that Israel had killed all the prophets (Matthew 21:33-46). So in their refusal to accept Christ and His Way, they were simply running true to form, once again hearing directly from God and refusing to hear the Truth...and Faith comes by hearing.

Vss. 18-19

- Paul continues playing both sides of the board asking, "...surely they have never heard, have they?" Oh yes, yes they **HAVE** heard! Paul quotes Psalms 19:4, "Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the end of the world/to the end of the inhabited earth!" The "we were never told" defense is gone.
- Deuteronomy 32 is called the song of Moses and a song it may be, but if so, it is a song of judgement. Paul's point here in citing this verse of the song is that Israel has **ALWAYS** been rebellious and obstinate and unfaithful to the God who loves them and called them, even **before** the time of Moses! "You neglected the Rock who begot you and forgot the God who gave you birth", (Deuteronomy 32:18).

Vss. 20-21

- But Paul can already hear the final objection. "But what if Israel simply did not understand? What if the message was so difficult to grasp that even when Israel did hear it, they were unable to grasp its meaning and Truth?" To this Paul answers with Isaiah 65:1-2. The Gentiles saw God's power and heard and understood God's truth and God was made real to them. Think of the Roman centurion who asked Jesus to heal his slave, not by coming to his house, but by just giving the Word, for the centurion understood that Jesus was given such authority. "Truly I say to you", Jesus responded to the crowd, "I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel!" (Matthew 8:10). But as for the Jews since the beginning, despite God's immeasurable patience, they have always remained "a disobedient and obstinate people".
- And it is important for us to remember that while Paul here is knocking down the arguments of the Jews, these same arguments have been used by many these last 2000 years. People always say, "I never knew", but that is no excuse, because after 2000 years its simply neglecting to know the Truth which was always available in God's Word. People may say, "I never saw that before", but turning a blind eye to the Truth simply because it is inconvenient is not a legitimate excuse. And then there is the amazing way we so effectively lie to ourselves. The "I thought I could handle it" defense never holds up. In the end, we just don't want to surrender to God and give up control over our lives to Christ.