

## WHY IS NATIONAL ISRAEL NOT YET SAVED?

Romans 9:30-10:21

Are you teachable? Or do you suffer from “hardening of the categories”? When confronted with new ideas and evidence, are you willing to consider?

My mother Marcella comes from a family of farmers. Her roots in the cornfields of western Illinois stretch five generations to the late 1700s. Charles Kingdon, my grandfather, my mother's father, farmed corn and soybean near the tiny village of Brimfield, Illinois. He married Mildred Porter, also from a farming family near Brimfield. Grandpa Kingdon was progressive and willing to try new methods of farming. One of those new methods that caused quite a stir in the 30's was the practice of leaving the stalks and leaves to rot in the fields after harvest. Traditional farmers cleaned up the debris after harvest. My great grandfather Porter was a small, wiry man and a traditionalist. As a little girl my mother remembers dinners with her grandparents, the Porters, at which her father Charlie and her grandpa Porter would argue about these “new fangled” ways of farming. It would get a little heated. Voices would rise. And then it would be over. Grandpa Porter would fold his arms, close his eyes and refuse to speak. Done. Mom's family would pack up and head home; there was no talking to Grandpa Porter after he shut down.

I hope you don't shut down like that when you're challenged. I hope you'll always be open to new ideas. I hope you will use your mind and be a principled thinker.

As we study Romans 9-11 and consider national Israel's response to God, we discover that Israel, like Grandpa Porter, shut down on God.

Jesus presented Himself to Israel as her long awaited Messiah. The spiritual leaders of Israel folded their arms and closed their eyes to the overwhelming evidence validating Jesus' claim. He was born of a virgin fulfilling the prophecies of Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14. He was born in the tribe of Judah in the line of King David fulfilling prophecies from Genesis 49:10 & 2 Samuel 7. He was born in Bethlehem fulfilling Micah 5:2. At twelve years of age He astounded the chief priests and scribes of Judaism by His understanding of Torah. Among his many miracles and healings, Jesus performed three that the Jewish rabbis taught could only be accomplished by Messiah: the healing of a Jewish leper, the casting out of a demon causing muteness, the opening of the eyes of a man born blind. He came riding into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Ultimately He submitted Himself to crucifixion on the cross fulfilling prophecies such as Psalm 16 & 22, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9. Finally, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53. He appeared to over 500 men at one time over the next forty days He spent with His disciples.

But there they sat, arms folded, eyes shut.

And there they sit to this day.

Israel remains hardened in her rejection of Jesus. God has promised that one day all Israel will be saved. But over the last two thousand years, the vast majority of Jews have rejected Jesus and will remain separated from God for eternity. In every generation a few Jews have believed, but even when the entire nation is saved, it will be but a remnant.

Why is the nation of Israel not yet saved and why will only a remnant of Jews be saved in this dispensation and in the end?

Romans 9 answers these questions from the divine side: through His sovereign and gracious election, God is limiting the number of Jews who receive His covenant promises.

Romans 10 answers these questions from the human side: Israel has not only rejected Jesus, but rejects justification by faith insisting that righteousness can be earned by keeping the law. We can also say that Romans 10 reveals that the partial hardening of Israel is the result of Israel's obstinate unbelief.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF ISRAEL'S PARTIAL HARDENING (9:30-10:21)

### *Israel Believes Righteousness Can Be Earned By Keeping The Law (9:30-10:4)*

*Romans 9:30–10:4 (ESV)*

**30** What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; **31** but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. **32** Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, **33** as it is written,

*"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

**1** Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. **2** For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. **3** For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. **4** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

To this day, official Judaism teaches that the only means to a right relationship with God is by keeping the Law and doing good works. Judaism is not alone in rejecting justification by faith. Of all the religions of the world, biblical Christianity alone teaches justification by faith.

I hope you realize that justification by works, that is, getting right with God by the things we do, is impossible. Nothing we do can "offset" the many ways we fail to love and glorify God both in attitude and action. God is just. He cannot leave our evil deeds unpunished. It would violate His character. If we receive God's punishment for our evil, we will spend eternity separated from Him. But God provided another to take our punishment upon Himself. Jesus suffered our punishment on the cross. If we believe it and rely upon it, God applies Jesus' payment to us. All our sin is forgiven. God declares us right with Him. His Spirit comes to live in us. We will live with God forever.

But that only comes to us by faith in Jesus; not by keeping the law and earning it.

Don't be like Israel. You can't work your way into a relationship with God. Put your faith in Jesus.

After sharing the way of salvation, that it is by faith, not works, I've had people tell me it can't be that easy. They can't conceive that God would offer forgiveness and life without requiring much, much more from us. That is what Israel believes and look at her condition. Paul insists that justification is by faith alone. This is true not only for Israel, but for all people.

### *Justification By Faith In Jesus Is Available To All (10:5-13)*

*Romans 10:5–13 (ESV)*

**5** For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

Why did a significant number of the 613 commandments of the law deal with animal sacrifices? Because God, in His grace, knew His people would transgress His law. He provided the means by which their transgressions could be atoned. This required faith. Faith that God would forgive their sin on the basis of the shed blood of the innocent animal. The law could never be kept perfectly nor earn a right standing before God. It always required faith. Through the sacrificial system, God was preparing His people for the ultimate and final blood sacrifice.

Verse five reflects the Jewish perspective that the law can earn a person a right standing before God. Verses six through thirteen assert that a right standing before God can only be secured by faith and this can be done without any extraordinary efforts and by Jews and Gentiles alike.

**6** But the righteousness based on 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 abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). **8** But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

What is Paul saying in verses 6-8? Paul is taking off on quotes from Deuteronomy 30:11-14 where Moses admonished the Israelites that they do not need to go looking hither and yon for God's commands because God's commands were right in front of them contained in Moses' teachings. In the same way Paul is saying that a sinner doesn't have to go searching high and low to find the way to be saved. The way of salvation; the good news of Jesus Christ, is right in front of them. The way of salvation is accessible to Jew and Gentile alike.

*6 But the righteousness based on 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 abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

The nation of Israel doesn't believe this. Those who are religious (and many are not) believe one must earn a right standing before God by working to keep the law. They continue to believe this and they continue to be separated from God, not receiving the blessings promised them.

But anyone, Jew or Gentile, who believes in the deity of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion for sin and His resurrection is saved. Salvation is here and accessible to all who will believe.

But in order to be saved, people need to hear "the word of faith". Is it possible that the nation of Israel did not hear "the word of faith" and that explains why she is not yet saved?

### *Israel Has Heard And Rejected The Word Of Faith Which Is Now Going Out To The Gentile Nations As God Warned (10:14-21)*

*Romans 10:14-21 (ESV)*

*14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*

How did you come to faith in Jesus?

Someone explained the good news to you. You may have heard the word of faith taught from the pulpit here or in another church. You may have heard it preached by Billy Graham, or Chuck Smith or Greg Laurie. Your mother, your father, one of your siblings or a friend may have shared. Or you may have heard the word of faith through a pamphlet or a book like *Stranger On The Road To Emmaus*. Whatever the case, someone conveyed the gospel to you.

That is what Paul is affirming in verses 14-15. Jews and Gentiles alike can be saved through faith in Jesus; salvation is not exclusive to the Jews. But in order to believe, Jews and Gentiles need to hear the message. So preachers need to be sent. (Remember Paul's reason for writing this letter to the church in Rome – that they might partner with him and *send him* to preach the gospel in the western part of the Empire!).

This remains true today. And it remains true in light of the election of God. A typical reaction to the doctrine of election is that if the people God elects to be saved will be saved and the nonelect will not, why share the gospel? The elect are going to be saved no matter what and the nonelect are not going to accept the gospel no matter. So why evangelize?

Because God has ordained that it is through the preaching of the gospel that the elect will be saved. The elect must hear the gospel and freely place their faith in the deity of Christ and in His shed blood and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin. Remember, the right way to respond to the antinomy of God's election and man's free will is to affirm both. Yes, the elect will be saved. But they must hear the word of faith, the gospel, and freely put their faith in Jesus. Both are true as we see in Romans 9 and 10.

So people must hear the word of faith in order to be saved. Is it possible that national Israel did not hear and this is the reason she is not yet saved?

**16** *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"* **17** *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

**18** *But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for*

*"Their voice has gone out to all the earth,  
and their words to the ends of the world."*

Paul uses the Old Testament in interesting ways we can't address here. But his point is that Israel did hear the word of faith. They heard the word of faith but did not accept it. The quote from Isaiah is from Isaiah 53:1. Isaiah 53 reveals in detail the rejection of the Messiah by Israel at this first coming; His death on behalf of the nation and His resurrection. The quote is an indictment against Israel. Israel had a detailed description of Messiah by which to recognize Him 700 years before He came. Yet when He came, fulfilling Isaiah's description, they rejected Him.

Israel heard the word of faith in the 8th century BC from Isaiah and then again from Jesus Himself. Israel is unsaved, not because she has not heard, but because she has not believed.

Israel's unbelief was not a surprise to God. Through Moses and again through Isaiah, God revealed a time in the future when God would move beyond Israel and take His salvation directly to the Gentile nations.

**19** *But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,*

*"I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;  
with a foolish nation I will make you angry."*

**20** *Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,*

*"I have been found by those who did not seek me;  
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."*

**21** *But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."*

Israel was supposed to be God's messenger to the Gentile nations. But because of her obstinate unbelief, God predicted a day when He would sideline the nation of Israel and take His salvation directly to the Gentile nations. This is being fulfilled in this Dispensation of Grace through the partial hardening of the nation of Israel (11:1-11; 25-27).

Between Romans 9 and 10 we see the balance between God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility. The reason so few Jews will experience God's covenant promises from the Divine Sovereignty side is because God has elected only a Remnant to be saved. The Rest of the Jewish majority He has hardened in their unbelief. The reason so few Jews will experience God's covenant promises from the Human Responsibility side is because of Israel's rejection of Jesus and their belief that a right standing before God can be earned by keeping the law. Even though the word of faith, the gospel has been preached to Israel, they stubbornly reject it. God has sidelined Israel for a time and is taking His salvation directly to the Gentile nations until the full number of Gentiles elected to salvation is fulfilled.

This passage also makes it clear we need to continue to share the gospel at every opportunity. God's election does not negate God's method. God has ordained that the means by which the elect are saved is through the hearing of the gospel. We are responsible to be preaching and sharing the gospel so that the elect might be saved.

And finally, if you want a relationship with God be assured God wants a relationship with you. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for all your sin. It's your sin that separates you from God. You can't work your sin off. Jesus paid for it in full. Believe it. You'll be forgiven. God the Spirit will come to live in your life. Your relationship with God will begin and never end. Trust in Jesus today!