

Faith Comes By Hearing

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[0:00] Romans chapter 10.

As we continue to work our way through this marvelous book of the Bible, Romans chapter 10, I'm going to read verses 16 through to the end of the chapter. That's where we're going to get to tonight.

Romans chapter 10, verse 16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard?

Yes, indeed. Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. But I say, did Israel not know? First, Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation.

[1:08] I will move you to anger by a foolish nation. But Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those who did not seek me. I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me.

But to Israel, he says, all day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. All right?

Now, verse 16 begins with a conjunction. A lot of verses in the Bible begin that way.

Not necessarily the best way to write in English these days. In fact, quite often, you know, when I was working on my dissertation, I had to be careful not to write improperly and start with conjunctions and things like that.

And so you wouldn't do that necessarily in English. But in Greek, they did that quite often. And it's not that they were beginning, necessarily beginning the sentence with a conjunction.

[2:16] But as you know, there are many run-on sentences in the Bible. And so this is the case here. And so it begins, verse 16, is carry on from the previous verses.

But it begins with a conjunction. And typically, it's translated, but, this word. It's, by the way, Allah, not Allah. But Allah is the conjunction, but.

But more accurately, I think, it would be more understandable if it were translated nevertheless.

Nevertheless. Nevertheless. That is, in bold contrast to what Paul has already said.

Nevertheless. And he's about to spoil our party here with what he says next. And so, I would say to you that verse 16 introduces a sad reality.

A sad reality concerning the gospel. And that is, verse 13, if you might remember, last Sunday night we looked at verse 13. It presents a universal promise, doesn't it?

[3:22] And that promise being, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved, shall be saved. That's a universal promise. Whoever calls will be saved.

Verses 14 and 15 present a universal program, if you will. And it's God's program. And what is that program?

How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach unless they are sent?

For as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. This is God's program from sending to preaching to hearing to believing to calling to salvation.

It's a universal program that God has put into place. So, we have a universal promise. Whoever calls will be saved. And God works that through his program that he has made all of us participants of.

[4:29] A universal program. Wonderful. A promise and a God-ordained program. Can't fail, right? Well, then when we get into verse 16, after Paul speaks of the promise and the program, a

universal promise, a universal program, he then brings us down to earth with a universal problem. That's where we want to begin as we take up our study of this chapter tonight. A universal problem. What is that problem? It's unbelief. It's unbelief. It's rejection. More than just simply unbelief. It's rejection of the truth. The gospel. It is rejection of the gospel. Indeed, it is rejection of Jesus Christ himself. It's a universal problem. And that is what the word, but, in verse 16, prepares us for. And so, Paul says, But they have not all obeyed the gospel. And so, they have not all called. Because they have not all believed. Even though preachers have been sent to preach, and they've heard, but they've not believed, and they have not called. [5:43] And so, this is a universal problem. And it's a problem that is true of both Jew and Gentile. I know that, Paul, and you know, because I've already mentioned this a number of times, that these chapters, 9, 10, and 11, have Israel primarily in the crosshairs. Paul is focusing on Israel. And yet, the truths that he is sharing concerning Israel and the gospel and so forth apply to all of us. And so, I think Paul is saying that when he says, but they have not all obeyed the gospel, he's talking about Jews and Gentiles. And listen, this is the apostle Paul speaking here. And it's as if Paul is saying, I have preached the gospel around the world, his known world. I have been to many places, and to the best of my ability, I have proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. And God has blessed my gifts. Yes, he has. My efforts, that is. But, I want you to know. This is what Paul is saying. I want you to know. I'm the first to admit it. When I hold this back, that not all of my work has been, quote, successful. [6:58] This is Paul speaking. That is, not everyone to whom I have preached the gospel of Jesus Christ have become Christians. And that really goes without saying. And that is true of us today, too, as well. So, this is kind of a reality check for us that Paul is saying. And then he quotes Isaiah 53, 1. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? The implication being, no one has. Although, it's not all conclusive, inclusive. Some have. Paul did, by the way. But he quotes Isaiah 53, 1 for a reason. It seems clear that Paul has selected this particular verse in Isaiah in order to make his point. Because his objective at this place in the chapter is to give his readers a strong reality check. You see, in verse 15, he quoted from Isaiah 52 in verse 7. [8:15] We've already looked at that passage. He quoted Isaiah 52 in verse 7. How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. So forth and so forth. That's a quotation from Isaiah 52 in verse 7. And now, in the very next verse, verse 16, he quotes a verse from Isaiah 53. A verse just eight verses later. After the verse that he quoted in verse 15. And so, this is a strong dose of reality that he has given us. The problem. There's a problem. It's a problem of unbelief. Yes, there's God's promise. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And there's God's program. He sends preachers to preach so the people will hear, so the people will believe, so the people will call, and so people will be saved. That's God's program. His universal program. [9:14] And we're part of that. But then there's the problem. And I would be quick to add, and this is another reason why I believe he is quoting from Isaiah 53. That the problem of unbelief, and it's a big problem, is due to the content of the message. So, I guess we need to change the content of the message. So, the more people will believe. Oh, no. But we do need to understand, and this is, I think, Paul's point, that the problem of unbelief is due to the content of the message. And again, that's another reason why Paul is quoting Isaiah 53 in verse 1. You see, Isaiah 53, you know anything about Isaiah 53? The suffering servant. That famous chapter. And I would be so bold as to say that Isaiah 53 is the most significant Old Testament passage concerning the Messiah's suffering, His rejection, His cross, His death. [10:21] It's the most significant passage in all the Old Testament. And Paul is quoting the first verse from Isaiah 53 to make his point. And so, Paul is saying that the nature of the message is the problem.

Not a problem in a negative sense. In the sense that we need to change it. But it's the problem concerning unbelief. It's the problem. It's the reason for unbelief.

Because the gospel was not the kind of message they wanted to hear. And that's true still today, isn't it?

Right? James Montgomery Boyce, and I like Boyce. He's dead now and with the Lord. But he wrote, and I quote, Today, if we preach a message suited to our listeners' wants and felt needs, we can gain a wide hearing.

Right? If we tell them that Jesus will give them treasure on earth rather than treasure in heaven, people will line up at the trough. If we tell them that Jesus will make them feel good rather than make them holy, people will clamor for the fix.

[11:37] If we tell them that Jesus died to cure them of their low self-esteem rather than their sins, they will pay for our glass cathedral.

That's kind of a slam against, well, you know who. Much of the modern church growth movement is built on exactly such reasoning, he said. And it works.

Doesn't it? It works well. It builds mega churches. And it makes the bearers of the, quote, mega gospel rich.

Because it is what sinful people want to hear. I think he's right. But that's not the gospel, is it? That's not the gospel.

The true gospel is the gospel of a crucified Savior suffering in our place for our sins. And that's not the message that the world wants to hear.

[12:35] That gospel, quite frankly, is repugnant to the natural unsaved man or woman. And because of that, it is rejected.

So the problem is the message. And yet the only way to become a believer is to hear the gospel. That's kind of a catch-22, isn't it?

Or it seems that way. That the gospel, the message, is the problem. And people will not give it a hearing because they do not want that message. And yet, God says very clearly, and we're going to see this in the very next verse, that you'll never believe unless you hear it.

That is, not just hear it with the instrumentality of hearing, a perception of it, but giving it a hearing, a serious hearing.

You'll never believe. Remember Romans, excuse me, remember verse 14? How shall they believe in Him whom they have never heard?

[13:40] Never heard. So hearing is crucial. And hearing leads to believing, and believing leads to calling, and calling leads to salvation. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So it's crucial that people hear the message. And yet, is it the message that keeps people from hearing? Not that the message is at fault.

I always have to add that in case you misunderstand me. And then, to sum that up, Paul says in verse 17, So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

There it is. It's so crucial that the message be heard. Now, this is an interesting verse, by the way. In fact, I don't know very many like this in the entire Bible.

Did you know that in the Greek text, the Greek translation of this verse, there are no verbs in the entire sentence? No verbs. You say, well, there's one right here in my Bible.

[14:41] Well, that was added. Comes. Faith comes by hearing. Comes is a verb, but that's not in the original text. The whole verse is nothing but primarily nouns and other helping words.

But no verbs. No verbs. So it would literally read, so faith from hearing. And hearing through the Word of Christ. By the way, that is a better translation.

Christ, the older and more accurate manuscripts have Christ, Christos there. And some of our translations will bring that out, unless you have a King James or New King James.

But that's how it would literally read. So faith from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ. No verbs. And what is this hearing?

Hearing. It's not hearing as in an action or a verb. It's a noun. What is this hearing? Or maybe we should put it this way, the thing heard. What is it?

[15:47] Well, you know, don't you? It's the Word of Christ. It's the Gospel. It's the Gospel. Or more literally, it is Christ, the Word of Christ.

It's Christ speaking through that Gospel. When it is preached. That's the idea here in this earth. So I could translate it this way.

Faith comes from hearing the message. And the message is heard through the Word of Christ. Now this is important.

It's an important truth for believers. And why would that be? Well, if, as Paul says, people can only be saved by hearing the Gospel message, then we've got to make sure they hear it.

Right? And so, there is a universal promise. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[16:48] There is a universal program. Sending, preaching, hearing, believing, calling, salvation. But there is also this universal problem.

But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. Not all obeyed the Gospel. Now all, that is, will not hear the message of Christ.

All will not give it a hearing, this message of Christ. But it is the hearing of the message that brings about faith. And yet the message continues to go out, doesn't it?

Even though there are many who do not believe because the problem is the message. It's not a message they want to hear. And yet, it is the message they must hear in order to believe and call and be saved.

But God is gracious to continue to send out that message. Even to those who have, to this point, refused to give it a hearing.

[17:56] Who have rejected it. But the message continues to go. And so finally, as we come to the end of this chapter, there is a universal proclamation.

A universal proclamation. Paul asks and answers two questions in the next few verses.

He asks, have they not heard the Gospel? Now he's speaking specifically to Israel or concerning Israel, but through them and by implication to all others, because he's certainly going to include all Jews and Gentiles as we go along here.

But there's the question, have they not heard? It's crucial that they hear, have they not heard? And his answer is indeed yes. And the second question, did Israel not know?

Know the Gospel, that is. And the answer to that question is yes. It's implied, he doesn't say that, but we understand that's his meaning. So it's yes to both questions.

[19:01] Have they not heard? Yes, they have. Did Israel not know the truth? Yes, they did know. And then to support his answer, he quotes a psalmist and two prophets.

He quotes David, and then Moses, and then a few quotes from Isaiah. And yet, really, when you look at it, he actually is quoting God.

It's God doing the speaking here. And so look at verse 18 again, and let you see how he does this. Again, he asks this question, but I say, have they not heard?

Yes, indeed. And then he quotes Psalm 19 and verse 4. There's a quote from Psalm 19.

In fact, let me read the first part of that psalm, because I think it will make even more sense to us. Where David writes, and this part is familiar to us, The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork.

[20:12] Day unto day utters speech. Night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. That is the revelation of God.

Their line, or that's the New King James really is the word sound. Their sound, and here's the quote there in Romans. It says, their sound has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

What about this sound and words? What are we talking about here? We're talking about God's revelation. His self-revelation. It has been proclaimed.

Even the heavens declare it. So the question is, then, have they not heard? Indeed they have. The whole world has heard. And that's his point.

The whole world has heard. You're without excuse, Israel. You've heard. The whole world has heard.

[21:13] But then he goes on to the next question, and he quotes Moses. But I say, did Israel not know? Or understand it? And the implication, the implied answer is, yes, they did.

And he quotes Moses. First, Moses. First, Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation.

I will move you to anger by a foolish nation. Did you not know, Israel? Yes, you knew. And you've rejected the gospel, and so now the gospel has gone to the Gentiles.

That's what he's talking about there when he says, provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation. That is, not a nation in the sense of Israel.

They're not Israel. They're Gentiles. They're the other nations. And their belief has provoked you to anger, to jealousy, by this, quote, foolish nation.

[22:10] The Gentiles, again. So, see, here's the point. This is the truth. The message is universally proclaimed throughout the world, and it continues to be so.

The whole world, even the heavens, declare the glory of God. Did you not know? Have you not heard? Indeed, yes, you have.

The message has gone out to the nations, the Gentile nations as well, and that made you angry. I gave it to you first, and you rejected it.

Did you not know? Did you not hear? And then he quotes Isaiah for his second prophet. He says, but Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those who did not seek me.

Who would that be? The Gentiles, again. And I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me. And by the way, this is such a testimony to the grace of God.

[23:18] That he would save people who were not even looking for him. That he would save and manifest himself to those who did not even ask for him.

Again, this is the Gentile nation. So he is, in a sense, he is rebuking Israel here, of course.

Did you not hear? You did. Even the heavens declared the truth. And because of your rejection, now the gospel has gone to the Gentiles.

And they have believed. In vast numbers, Gentiles have believed. And they initially were not even looking for me.

Did not even want me. What a rebuke. And yet also a testimony to the universal proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.

[24:18] That even today is going around this world constantly. And then to Israel he says. I love this verse.

All day long I have stretched out my hands. That is stretching out my hands in to receive you. To welcome you.

All day long. On and on and on. I have stretched out my hands to you. To a disobedient and contrary people.

By the way, the word disobedient is more than just. Well, it's more than just what we would think of the word. It is a word that literally means to contradict.

It's an overt kind of action. Not just simply refusing to obey or refusing to do something God has called upon us to do.

[25:19] This word that's translated disobedient means to speak. Actually speak against. In this case, the truth. God's revelation.

The gospel. What a stinging rebuke. Against Israel. And yet, through them, a rebuke to many in this world today who have heard the truth over and over and over again.

There's not a group that that is more indicative of in this world than Americans. Who have heard the gospel over and over and over again.

Many have been raised with it. Brought, carried, drug to church, to Sunday school. Exposed to the truth.

Over and over again. And we could say, like Paul said of Israel, we could say to America today. I think God is saying to America. Have you not heard? Indeed you have.

[26:34] Did you not know? Did not understand? Yes. And all day long, I've stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.

Wow. What a rebuke. And yet, we would have to end this by saying, though it's true, who has believed our report?

And many people that you might share the gospel with, the majority of them likely will not believe you. And yet, some will.

Some will. Some will hear and believe and call and be saved to the glory of God.