

Israel's Present Situation

Romans 10:1—13

In Romans 9, Paul explains to Israel that they are no longer in their place of honor. They were given every opportunity and advantage to follow God's instructions, yet they failed time and time again. God revealed Himself through Israel, and Israel was going to reveal God to the world. When the leadership of Israel rejected the Father by allowing John the Baptist to die (John 1:6), rejected the Son by crucifying Him, and then finally rejected the witness of the Holy Spirit by stoning Stephen (Acts 7:51), God put Israel's promise of the Kingdom on hold, raised up the Apostle Paul, and began going directly to the Gentiles. God is now reaching the world through the Gospel of Grace as the Body of Christ disseminates the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The dispensational change, from Israel's prophetic program to today's Mystery program, is why Paul needed to write Romans 9—11. He first explains their past (Romans 9), and then what these changes mean to them in this present dispensation (Romans 10). Since God took the nation of Israel from a place of honor, how does that affect individual Israelites today? This is the questions Paul answers in chapter 10. What Paul has to say in Romans 10 can be taught to any Israelite today because it explains how God is currently working with the Church, the Body of Christ, and specifically what God is now doing with the Jews.

Israel's problem (verses 1—4)

Paul first summarizes Israel's problem. They had the zeal to serve God, but they didn't have proper knowledge. It's impossible to serve God properly unless you understand what God desires. Many were sincere in what they believed, but they believed in the wrong thing. They made up their own rules about how best to please God, but failed to follow what God had specifically told them to do. The leaders of Israel were attempting to reach God through their own good works. They thought that they would be able to become righteous by following the Mosaic Law, and in a sense this is true (Deuteronomy 6:24—25). The fallacy in their thinking is that no one is able to perfectly follow the Law. Once you fail to live by the Law, you stand condemned by the Law. The Law was put into place in order to teach Israel, and the world, that they would not be able to follow the ordinances of the Law, and therefore they would need a Savior (Galatians 3:24—25). Those who live under the Law will be judged by the Law, so those who break even the smallest part of the Law are guilty of transgressing the whole Law (Romans 2:12; James 2:10). Anyone guilty of any point of the Law cannot claim to be righteous, and therefore when a person breaks the Law, it condemns that person (Galatians 2:19). A person who tries to be justified by the Law in this Age of Grace has actually fallen away from God's grace as they try to please God by following the Law (Galatians 5:4). Instead, we must realize that our righteousness comes through the faith of Christ and our faith in Him (Philippians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

Israel mistakenly thought that obeying the Law would lead to righteousness and to eternal life. With that thinking, they didn't seek out God, but depended upon their own works to save themselves. It turns out that those who sought the Law were unable to obtain righteousness, while those who believed in God were actually able to fulfill the Law, in Christ. When Scripture says that Christ is the end of the Law for all who believe, it is saying that Christ is the end result of the Law for all who believe. In other words, the Law showed mankind how they could be righteous, but it also proved that man could not obtain righteousness through the Law. The Law thus points man in the direction of Jesus Christ as the only means of righteousness. Christ was the end result of the failure of the Law to justify. Even today, in this Dispensation of Grace, the Law is effective in pointing men to Christ (1 Timothy 1:8—11), but the believer is not under the condemnation of the Law because we have fulfilled the Law in Christ.

Israelite salvation today (verses 5—13)

Paul now gets to some dispensational differences in salvation between Israel's past and what is happening now under Grace. These Israelites, Paul is writing to, were accustomed to living under the Mosaic Law, but they are now living in the Dispensation of Grace, and so Paul needs to explain some new information. He first made sure they knew that salvation was always by faith and never by performing the works of the Law. Israel was required to do the works of the Law to prove their faith (James 2:22, 26). These works of the Law were important for Israel under their prophetic program, but these works are not something that are to be done in this church age (Romans 3:20). This is the first thing that Paul is teaching them in Romans 10.

Paul now goes into detail about exactly what today's righteousness based on faith is. He first tells them that they had the word of God right in their midst, but they rejected it. He then explains the gospel. Many mid-Acts teachers apply verses 9 and 10 to be the Gospel of the Kingdom because of the word *confess*. I believe Paul is speaking of a gospel that aligns perfectly with 2 Corinthians 15:1—4.

To understand this verse correctly, it is necessary to understand the word *confess*. We often think of telling all, of spilling your guts or revealing some deep, dark secret. The Greek word is *ho-mo-lo-ge'-o* is made up of two words; *same* and *say*, and literally means to say the same thing. To confess your sins means saying the same thing as God, to be in agreement with Him concerning your wrong doings.

There are many who think salvation is based on believing in Jesus Christ and then confessing before men that Jesus is Lord. For them, believing alone is not sufficient to save, because they understand this verse to say that works must be added to the mix. This verse is often used to show that a believer must make a public declaration of their decision to follow Christ. This is also why many mid-Acts teachers teach that this is the gospel preached to Israel in the past, and is not the Gospel of Grace. Much of the problem comes in misunderstanding what the word *confess* means.

Using this verse to say we need to confess before men is wrong on four points:

1. The words *confess* and *profess* are confused and misused. Those who think we need to confess our decision publicly are really professing and not confessing.
2. The biblical word *confess* means to say the same thing. In this case the unbeliever is hearing the message of faith and agreeing with God's that the message is indeed true.
3. The original Greek does not have us confessing that Jesus is Lord but literally says to confess with your mouth Lord Jesus. We are not only acknowledging that Jesus is Lord, but we are also agreeing with God concerning everything about the person of Jesus Christ.
4. We are not professing this to men but confessing (agreeing) on everything God has said about His Son. This agreement is with God, and has nothing to do with men.

The verse continues by stating that those who have agreed with God about His Son, AND have believed that God has raised Him from the dead, they will be saved. The first statement points to the Person of Christ, while the second points to His work on the cross. This is absolutely consistent with what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:1—4.

This is also consistent with the context of this passage with Paul explaining to individual Israelites what the current situation is in this Age of Grace. This Gospel is what we believe today, in contrast to what they needed to believe while the Gospel of the Kingdom was being preached.

Note that Paul is not telling these Kingdom believers that they now need to be saved in the Dispensation of Grace. They will always remain Kingdom believers. He is explaining to them what unbelieving Jews need to know in this dispensation in order to be saved.

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