

EXPLANATION OF 45TH BIBLEBOOK

ROMANS 10 (April A.D. 67)

INTRODUCTION

In Romans chapters 9 to 11 Paul shows that the rejection of unbelieving Jews and the salvation of believing Gentiles are not against the clear teaching of the Bible for the following reasons:

- It was not against God's covenant promise, because God has the sovereign right to choose whom he wants and to harden whom he wants (9:6-24).
- It was clearly predicted as a warning in the Old Testament revelation (9:25-29; 10:18-21). Therefore Israel has no excuse that the predicted situation became reality.
- The message of salvation was as accessible to Israel during the Old Testament period as it is now to Gentiles and Jews during the New Testament period (10:5-8).
- Salvation during the Old Testament period and during the New Testament period is only by faith¹. People are rejected for their unbelief and accepted for their faith (9:30-33; 10:1-4,11,17).
- Therefore there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles anymore (3:22; 10:12-13)!

OUTLINE

THEME. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES

(I) 10:1-13. Man's righteousness by the law versus God's righteousness by faith.

- a. Only God has sovereignty. Man has responsibility (10:1)
- b. Human religious zeal for the law is fruitless (10:2-3)
- c. (The first possible translation): Christ is the goal (fulfilment, substance, meaning) of the law (10:4)
- d. (The second possible translation): Christ is the end (termination) of the law (10:4)
- e. The Old Testament taught the difference between law-righteousness and faith-righteousness (10:5-7).
- f. The word (the gospel) that requires faith and elicits faith is still near to everyone (10:8)
- g. Justification (salvation) comes only through faith in the heart that is confessed with the mouth (10:9-10)
- h. Assurance of salvation in Old Testament and New Testament (10:11)
- i. Salvation is for Jew and Gentile without distinction (10:12-13).

(II) 10:14-21. God's rejection of unbelieving Israel was not arbitrary.

- a. The historical sequence of the process of salvation (10:14-15a).
- b. The authorised messengers of the good news (10:15b).
- c. Only the minority in Israel responded to the message of good news (10:16).
- d. The hearing of the gospel is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ (10:17).

(III) 10:18-21 Israel's failure to respond to the gospel cannot be excused.

- a. Israel heard the message (10:18)
- b. Israel understood the message (10:19)
- c. Israel is passed by due to her disobedience and obstinacy (10:20)
- d. Israel remains responsible for rejecting God and his Messiah (10:21).

EXPLANATION

(I) 10:1-13. Man's righteousness by the law versus God's righteousness by faith.

10:1. Brothers, my heart's desire (good pleasure) and prayer to God for them (the Israelites) (is) that they may be saved.

10:2. For I testify (vipa) about them that they have (vipa) a zeal for God, but (it is) not based on knowledge.

10:3. For failing to acknowledge (disregarding)² (vppa) the righteousness that comes from God (or: the righteousness that belongs to God)(Genitive), and continually seeking (vppa) to establish (vnaa) their own (righteousness), they did not submit³ (viap) to righteousness of (or: from) God.

10:4. The end (the termination)⁴ of the law (in the sense of God's legal requirement for righteousness as interpreted and elaborated by the Jewish teachers) (is) Christ so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (vppa).

[OR also true, but not likely here: **10:4.** For the goal (the meaning, substance) of the law (in the sense of the Old Testament revelation) (is) Christ so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (vppa).]

10:5. For Moses writes about (describes)(vipa) the righteousness that is by the law as follows⁵: "The one who does (vpaa) these things will certainly live (vifm) by them".

10:6. But the righteousness that is by faith says (vipa), "Do not say (vsaa) in your heart, 'Who will ascend (vifd) into heaven?' " that is (vipa), to bring Christ down (vnaa).

10:7. or "Who will descend (vifd) into the deep (the Abyss)?" that is (vipa), to bring Christ up (vnaa) from the dead.

¹ cf. Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:6-9,26-29

² G: agnoeó

³ G: hupotassó

⁴ G: telos

⁵ G: hoti. This word introduces quotation marks

10:8. But what does it say (vipa)? “The word⁶ is (vipa) close to you, in your mouth (i.e. on your lips) and in your heart”, that is (vipa), the word of faith which we are *constantly* proclaiming (vipa).

10:9. Because if you confess (vsaa) with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe (vsaa) in your heart that God *once for all* raised (viaa) him from the dead, you will *certainly* be saved (vifd).

10:10. For with (your) heart you *continually* believe (vipp) (leading) to⁷ righteousness and with (your) mouth you *continually* confess (vipp) (leading) to⁸ salvation.

10:11. For the Scripture says (vipa), “Anyone who *continually* trusts (vppa) in him will *certainly* not be put to shame (vifp)”.

10:12. For there is (vipa) no distinction⁹ between Jew and Greek. For the same (Lord) (is) Lord of all, rich (in blessings) towards all who *again and again* call¹⁰ (vppm)(medium voice in Joel 2:32) on him.

10:13. For everyone who calls (vsam) on the name of the Lord will *certainly* be saved (vifp).

Paul contrasts the righteousness which Jews hope to earn by doing the works of the law with the righteousness which Christ earned and is received by faith in Christ’s completed work of salvation.

a. Only God has sovereignty. Man has responsibility (10:1)

Romans 9 taught that God has the sovereign prerogative to show mercy to certain people and consequently save them as well as the right to withhold his grace from other people and consequently harden them.

However this fact may not determine how Christians relate to the lost people in the world, in particular the Jews! God did not reveal to anyone whom he chooses, calls and saves! Therefore the responsibility of all Christians is to have a genuine concern for the lost people in all the nations of the world, to pray for them and to preach the gospel to them¹¹.

Election is God’s prerogative, but proclaiming the gospel is the task of Christians!

b. Human religious zeal for the law is fruitless (10:2-3)

Israel failed to attain righteousness. Although the natural nation of Israel was very zealous to *attain* righteousness in God’s eyes by trying to keep the law, they failed. Their strong drive to live in accordance with God’s will was not based on the proper understanding of God’s revelation in the Bible. They failed to attain God’s righteousness because they had no knowledge of the righteousness that God *imputes and imparts* in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

They failed to acknowledge¹² or seek God’s righteousness. Instead they sought to establish their own kind of righteousness by keeping the law. Even when they heard the gospel about God’s righteousness offered to them in Jesus Christ, they refused to submit to it.

Excuses people make in order to justify their conduct.

- People sometimes say that ignorance is a good excuse not to be judged by God. This popular view says that people, who did not know the truth, should not be judged. They say that God would be unfair (unrighteous) if he judged them.

However, Romans 1:19-20 and 2:12-16 teaches that no-one in the world is absolutely ignorant about God’s revelation and therefore no-one can hide behind this excuse (3:19-20)! Moreover, Romans 10:2-3,16-21 teaches that everyone is responsible to really listen to the gospel and understand God’s purposes correctly.

- People sometimes say that good intentions are a good reason to be approved by God. This popular view says that people, who have good intentions and try to save themselves by whatever means (good works or any religion), should be accepted by God.

However, Romans 10:3 teaches that everyone must let go of his own way of salvation and submit to God’s way of salvation! God has ordained that there is no other way of salvation than by faith in Jesus Christ¹³. God demands that all people submit to his ordinances. Augustine said, “It is better to limp in the right way, than to run with all our might (zeal) out of the way”!

c. (The first possible translation): Christ is the goal (fulfilment, substance, meaning) of the law (10:4)

The Greek word ‘telos’ may have two meanings: goal or end. And the Greek word ‘nomos’ may also have two meanings: the Old Testament revelation or the law as interpretation by the Jews. Thus, Romans 10:4 has two possible translations and both are true.

- Christ is the goal (fulfilment, substance) of the Old Testament revelation

⁶ G: réma. A specific word (verse in the Bible)

⁷ G: eis

⁸ G: eis

⁹ G: diastolé

¹⁰ G: epikaleomai

¹¹ Mark 16:15; 1 Timothy 2:1-4

¹² cf. John 1:10

¹³ John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5

- Christ is the end (termination) of the Jewish interpretation of the law

First translation: Jesus Christ is the goal (fulfilment, substance) of the Old Testament revelation, so that there may be righteousness (salvation) for everyone (Jew and Gentile) who believes. *The law refers to the Old Testament revelation (the Law and the Prophets) as the preparation of the New Testament revelation which Jesus Christ came to complete and fulfil.*

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus Christ himself says that he did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them. Paul proves that the New Testament revelation about justification by faith does not oppose the Old Testament revelation. Also the Old Testament revelation taught justification, not by the works of the law, but by faith as the way of salvation (cf. 3:21; 4:7-8; 9:11-12; 10:9-13; 11:20,23)¹⁴. Thus, 'the gospel' had already been proclaimed during the Old Testament period (3:21-22)¹⁵!

Jesus Christ came to restore the original intention of the Old Testament revelation, namely, justification by faith, and to actually complete and fulfil the Old Testament revelation, so that justification by faith may become a reality for everyone who believes. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets¹⁶ in the sense of being the perfect reality of what the Old Testament prophets predicted and what the Old Testament ceremonial law foreshadowed¹⁷.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the teachings of the Old Testament revelation, setting forth the true meaning of the law and revealing himself as the fulfilment of the Old Testament types and predictions¹⁸. The goal or purpose of the Old Testament law was to point to the first coming of Christ and his work of salvation as Prophet, Priest and King and to prepare people for his coming. It prepared people that they might *live the new life*, that is, a life of loving God and loving the neighbour¹⁹ by faith. *Jesus Christ himself is the ultimate significance and essential contents of the whole Old Testament revelation.* Only this one person, Jesus Christ, completely and perfectly fulfilled every part of the Old Testament revelation.

Jesus Christ alone fulfilled the Old Testament.

- He alone fulfilled the righteous requirement of God's law. By his life, death and resurrection he fulfilled God's absolute requirement that all sins must be perfectly punished and atoned for and that all people must live a perfect righteous and holy life. Only Jesus Christ earned God's required righteousness, holiness and redemption for his people²⁰ and guarantees their eternal salvation²¹.
- He alone fulfilled the moral law. He explained and lived the perfect meaning of the moral law: the Ten Commandments²².
- He alone fulfilled the ceremonial law. The ceremonial law are external regulations under the old order²³ and consisted of laws concerning holy people (priests), holy places (temple), holy times (Sabbath and feasts) and holy actions (circumcision, ablutions, clean food, animal sacrifices, the first born, the first fruit of the harvest and the tithes). All these Old Testament laws were types or *shadows* that pointed forward to the new order, namely, the *reality* of Jesus Christ and his work of salvation during the New Testament period²⁴. By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament type of the temple building: he tore it down²⁵ and replaced it with the New Testament Body of Christ²⁶. By his resurrection from the dead he changed the priesthood²⁷ and is the only indestructible, permanent and perfectly holy High Priest²⁸. By his death on the cross he fulfilled the type of 'a lamb without defect' that was sacrificed as atonement for sins²⁹. He thus terminated the need for all (animal) sacrifices³⁰. He replaced the physical circumcision of the body with the spiritual circumcision of the heart by his Spirit (2:28-29)³¹. *When Israel accepted and obeyed the ceremonial law during the Old Testament period, they accepted and obeyed Jesus Christ.* And when Jesus Christ had fulfilled the law³², he cancelled it³³ and set it aside³⁴. After the first coming

¹⁴ Galatians 3:6-22

¹⁵ Galatians 3:6-8; Hebrews 4:2

¹⁶ Matthew 5:17

¹⁷ Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1

¹⁸ Luke 18:31; 24:25-27,44

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-39

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:30

²¹ Hebrews 5:8-9

²² Matthew 5:17-48; Mark 12:28-31

²³ Hebrews 9:10

²⁴ Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 9:10; 10:1

²⁵ Matthew 27:51

²⁶ John 2:19-21

²⁷ Hebrews 7:12

²⁸ Hebrews 7:16-28

²⁹ Exodus 12:4-5; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 7:26-27

³⁰ Hebrews 10:8-10

³¹ Colossians 2:11-12

³² Matthew 5:17

³³ Colossians 2:14

³⁴ Ephesians 2:15

of Jesus Christ the ceremonial laws may never again be re-introduced into the Church! Any religion that maintains the law as a means of gaining righteousness with God is accursed³⁵.

- **He alone fulfilled the civil law.** The civil laws of the nation-state of Israel consisted of laws about the kings, property, marriage, sex offences, war, prisoners of war, tax, etc. Jesus Christ alone perfected and superseded the civil laws by establishing the Kingdom of God³⁶ together with the culture of the Kingdom of God³⁷ within all the nations of the world³⁸. *The nation of Israel and the Old Testament laws were only the means of God's revelation, but not the final goal of God's revelation.* From the beginning God purposed that the means of revelation would fall away and make place for the goal of revelation, namely Jesus Christ. "These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ³⁹". *When Jesus Christ came, Israel as a people of God and the ceremonial and civil law of Israel reached their final purpose.* The 'mystery' that is revealed in the New Testament is that 'Jesus Christ lives in believers'⁴⁰. They come from both the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations and together constitute 'the people of God' on completely equal terms⁴¹.
- **He alone fulfilled the Prophets.** All the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, the enthronement of the Messiah (Christ), and the functions of the Messiah (Christ) as the Greatest Prophet, the Highest Priest and the Mightiest and Eternal King became a reality in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. During the Old Testament period people were only justified by faith in *the coming Messiah* (Christ)⁴². But during the New Testament period people are justified by faith in *the Christ who has already come* (3:28)!
- **He alone is the Greatest Prophet.** It was no one less than the Spirit of Jesus Christ who *predicted and proclaimed* the Old Testament prophecies through the Old Testament prophets⁴³! It was no one less than Jesus Christ who also *fulfilled* these prophecies in the New Testament history! For example, Christ fulfilled the prophecies of being 'God with us'⁴⁴, taking on the human nature in Bethlehem⁴⁵, dying on the cross⁴⁶, being resurrected from the dead⁴⁷ and ascended into heaven⁴⁸. He was the only Prophet in history whose prophecies were all fulfilled. In this way Jesus Christ reveals himself as *the Greatest Prophet* that ever lived⁴⁹. Jesus Christ spoke God's final words to man⁵⁰. And this faith has "*once for all* been entrusted to the saints"⁵¹. Every prophet that comes after Jesus Christ and tries to change God's revelation or add to God's revelation is a false prophet⁵². All so-called prophets that pronounce revelations that contradict the revelation given in the Bible are guilty of adding to the Word of God, are eternally condemned (accursed)⁵³ and should be rejected! "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God. ... If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him⁵⁴."
- **He alone is the Highest Priest.** Jesus Christ fulfilled all the requirements or demands of the Old Testament law. In his human nature, he lived a complete holy and righteous life on earth⁵⁵ and thus only he fulfilled the requirements of God's moral laws. He lived a perfect life, caring⁵⁶, loving and praying for people⁵⁷. Finally he died on the cross to make atonement for the sins of people⁵⁸. He was the only Priest in history who gave *himself* as a *willing* sacrifice for sins⁵⁹. He is the only Priest who gave himself as a *perfect* (sinless) sacrifice for the

³⁵ Galatians 3:10-14; cf. 1:6-9

³⁶ Matthew 4:17; 12:28-30

³⁷ Matthew chapters 5 to 7, 13, 18 and 23 to 25

³⁸ Matthew 24:14

³⁹ Colossians 2:17

⁴⁰ Colossians 1:27

⁴¹ Ephesians 3:6

⁴² Genesis 12:3; 15:6; 22:18; Galatians 3:16

⁴³ 1 Peter 1:10-12; cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16

⁴⁴ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23

⁴⁵ Micah 5:2

⁴⁶ Psalm 22:1,16,18

⁴⁷ Psalm 16:10-11

⁴⁸ Psalm 110:1,4

⁴⁹ Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Acts 3:22-23

⁵⁰ Hebrews 1:1-2

⁵¹ Jude 3

⁵² Deuteronomy 18:15-22; Proverbs 30:6; Matthew 15:3-14; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19

⁵³ Galatians 1:8-9

⁵⁴ 2 John 9-10

⁵⁵ Hebrews 4:15; 7:24-28

⁵⁶ Psalm 78:72

⁵⁷ Isaiah 53:12

⁵⁸ Isaiah 53:5-6; Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-7

⁵⁹ John 10:17-18

atonement of sins⁶⁰. He is the only Priest who *lives forever* because he has been resurrected from the dead. He has no successor and has set aside all other religious priests⁶¹! In this way Jesus Christ reveals himself as *the Greatest High Priest* that ever lived and still lives⁶².

- **He is the Mightiest and Eternal King.** Jesus Christ fulfilled the prediction of the coming King⁶³, who by his royal rule would deliver his people from the power of their enemies and rule over them forever⁶⁴. He has all power and authority in heaven and on earth⁶⁵! He inaugurated the only Kingdom that will never be shaken⁶⁶, that will finally crush all other kingdoms in the world⁶⁷ and that will last forever⁶⁸! So all other political, military and religious rulers in the world must beware⁶⁹! In this way Jesus Christ reveals himself as *the Greatest King* that ever lived.

Interpretation of the Old Testament. Because Jesus Christ came to fulfil the Old Testament revelation, *the Old Testament can only be correctly understood in the bright light of the New Testament revelation*⁷⁰!

d. (The second possible translation): Christ is the end (termination) of the law (10:4)

Second translation: Jesus Christ is the end (termination) of the Jewish misinterpretation of the law, so that there may be righteousness (salvation) for everyone (Jew and Gentile) who believes. *The law refers to God's legal and righteous requirement for justification, especially in the twisted sense in which the Jewish religious leaders and teachers interpreted and elaborated the Law of Moses.* Paul ended the misconception that keeping the law is the means of justification (salvation).

In Leviticus 18:5 Moses described the legal requirement of God's law as follows, "The man who does the law (the decrees and laws of the Old Testament revelation), will live by them" (10:5)⁷¹. Since the return from Babylon (538 B.C.) till the time of Jesus the Jewish religious teachers interpreted the words 'will live' in Leviticus 18:5 as 'will be justified' (will be saved). They turned God's law into a religion of keeping/obeying laws as the way of salvation⁷². They consequently proceeded to bury the Old Testament under hundreds of their man-made interpretations and regulations of the law. They changed 'righteousness (salvation) by faith' into 'righteousness (salvation) by law'. These Jewish religious teachers set the Old Testament revelation aside and replaced it with their man-made laws⁷³! However after the fall into sin, not a single person can be justified by keeping the law! Therefore the only way anyone could be justified was and still is by faith⁷⁴ and the words "will live" in Leviticus 18:5 can only mean "living the sanctified life of a believer" by loving God and loving the neighbour (the summary of the commandments)⁷⁵!

Contrasting the Jewish view with the Old Testament teaching. It was not the Old Testament, but the Jewish religious teachers in the period between the exile to Babylon and the first coming of Christ that taught that people could be justified (saved) by doing works of the law. The Jews clearly misunderstood and misinterpreted God's purpose with the law.

In the Old Testament and in the New Testament itself there is absolutely no evidence that keeping the law was presented as the ground (basis) for justification during the Old Testament period and that this was displaced by faith as the ground (basis) for justification during the New Testament period due to Christ's completed work of salvation. *Nowhere in the Old Testament is it taught that the Law of Moses was the means to attain righteousness!* On the contrary, Paul's frequent appeal to the Old Testament and specifically the Law of Moses in support of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith makes this view untenable (e.g. in 3:21-22; 4:6-8,13; 9:15-16; 10:6-8; 15:8-9)⁷⁶! So *Paul is definitely NOT speaking of replacing the law as a way of salvation in the Old Testament period with the gospel as the way of salvation in the New Testament period.*

Paul is contrasting 'the false Jewish principle of legalism', i.e. attaining righteousness (salvation) through works of the law, with 'the true biblical principle of faith', i.e. attaining righteousness (salvation) through faith alone.

⁶⁰ Hebrews 4:15; 7:26

⁶¹ Hebrews 7:23-28

⁶² Psalm 110:4; Zechariah 6:13

⁶³ Genesis 49:10

⁶⁴ 1 Chronicles 17:14; Isaiah 9:7; Revelation 1:5; 19:16

⁶⁵ Matthew 28:18

⁶⁶ Hebrews 12:28

⁶⁷ Daniel 2:44; Revelation 17:14

⁶⁸ Isaiah 9:7

⁶⁹ Psalm 2

⁷⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 3:14-16

⁷¹ Leviticus 18:5

⁷² cf. Acts 15:1

⁷³ Mark 7:1-13

⁷⁴ Genesis 15:6

⁷⁵ Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31

⁷⁶ Galatians 3:10-11,17-22; 4:21-31

Therefore this second interpretation may be the one, which Paul intended here in Romans 10. Paul says that Jesus Christ *terminated* legalism, that is, the religion which tries to attain righteousness (salvation) by doing works of the law. He *made an end* to the Jewish misconception that righteousness could be earned by keeping the Law of Moses, especially the law as interpreted by the Jewish religious teachers and leaders! He terminated the law in the sense of making the law the ground of justification and keeping the law as the way to justification (salvation). He did this in order to establish clearly that righteousness (salvation) is not earned by doing the works of the law, but is freely given to people who believe in Jesus Christ.

e. The Old Testament taught the difference between law-righteousness and faith-righteousness (10:5-7).

Paul makes two quotations from the Old Testament Law to prove to Jews that also *the Old Testament revelation taught righteousness by faith (the principle of faith)*, which is the complete opposite of what the religious Jews taught, namely, righteousness by law (*the principle of legalism*).

As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul has the inspiration and authority from the Holy Spirit to adapt and apply the Scripture in the Old Testament to the New Testament⁷⁷.

- *Paul applies the salvation of Jewish believers in Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to the salvation of the Gentile believers in Romans 9:25-26.*
- *James applies the salvation of Jewish believers in Amos 9:11-12 to the salvation of Gentile believers in Acts 15:14-18.*
- *And Peter applies the Jews as God's chosen people in Exodus 19:4-6 to the Gentiles as God's chosen people in 1 Peter 2:9-10.*
- *Likewise Paul applies Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 to define the law-righteousness of the Jews. And he applies Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in Romans 10:6-7 to define the faith-righteousness taught in the gospel.* However, both Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in their contexts do not deal with law-righteousness, as the Jewish religious leaders and teachers falsely maintained.

The Jews eagerly pursued law-righteousness, which they derived from *their interpretation* of Leviticus 18:5. The wrong view of 'the law' is that human obedience to the moral, ceremonial and civil laws of God would lead to the justification (salvation) of Jews by God.

But Paul uses the same Leviticus 18:5 to prove the exact opposite. The correct view of 'the law' as God's absolute demand or requirement for every man is that:

- the unholiness and unrighteousness of man must be perfectly *punished*.
- man must live an absolute perfect holy and righteous life in order to be *justified*.
- man must live an absolute perfect life from beginning to end in order to be *sanctified*.

The law is thus God's 100% perfect standard for condemnation, justification and sanctification! Because not a single human being in history (except Jesus Christ) qualifies to meet God's standard of absolute perfection⁷⁸, the law condemns all human beings as sinners and lost people to spiritual, physical and eternal death! The way of law-righteousness is doomed to fail!

Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 to prove that no one is justified by law-righteousness (10:5).

Leviticus 18:5 says, "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them." Leviticus 18 speaks about the state of sin and in that context verse 5 can never mean 'obedience leads to eternal life' (justification, salvation). It can only mean, 'obedience leads to a sanctified life' (sanctification).

Leviticus 18:5 by itself (taken out of its context) is a principle that has relevance in three different states of man:

a. In the state of sinlessness, obedience would have led to eternal life⁷⁹. If any person in history would have been righteous to the full extent of God's demand, that is, perfectly righteous, then he would have been justified and God would have given him eternal life.

The combination: "sin → condemnation → death" is taught in Romans 1:1 to 3:20 (6:23) and invariably is the combination in God's judgement. This is the combination for all people in history, except one, Jesus Christ, who was perfectly sinless⁸⁰.

Likewise the combination: "righteousness → justification → life" is taught in Romans 5:15-19 and invariably is the combination in God's salvation. This is the combination for all believers in Jesus Christ⁸¹. God's judgement is always according to truth: sin will lead to eternal death, but perfect righteousness will lead to eternal life.

However, obedience that leads to eternal life would have been possible only for Adam while he was in the state of sinless integrity! After the fall of Adam into sin and with him the fall of all mankind, regaining righteousness by

⁷⁷ John 14:26; 16:13-15; 2 Timothy 3:16

⁷⁸ Galatians 3:10-12; James 2:10

⁷⁹ Genesis 2:15-17

⁸⁰ Hebrews 4:15

⁸¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21

obedience to God's command is no longer possible for anyone, because "all have sinned" (3:23). "Not even one person is righteous (3:10). Only Christ is righteous⁸²! Even those Pharisees who think that they are righteous⁸³ are not righteous enough⁸⁴!

b. In the state of sin, obedience can never lead to justification (3:20,28; 10:5)⁸⁵. After the fall of mankind into sin, the principle of obedience can never again be the basis for man's acceptance with God. After the fall into sin the only combination left is: "sin-condemnation-death" (6:23). *The principle of Leviticus 18:5*, "The man who does these things will live by them", does not and cannot operate in the realm of sin. This is what Paul teaches throughout the letter to the Romans. No one can be justified by doing the works of the law, simply because no one is sinless and no one is perfectly obedient. Justification by doing (the law) is the contradiction of justification by believing (faith), because 'doing' always has human righteousness in view, but faith has divine righteousness in view.

The only righteousness that can be operative in man's sinful state is never the tainted and imperfect righteousness of man⁸⁶, but only the perfect holy righteousness that comes from God and which the gospel reveals (1:17; 3:21-22; 10:3).

It is this contrast between law-righteousness and faith-righteousness which Paul makes in Romans 10:5-7. *As an apostle, Paul has the right to pick out only the principle of Leviticus 18:5. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he used the same words, but with a different meaning than it has in its original context (Compare also Isaiah 7:14 with Matthew 1:23 and Amos 9:11-12 with Acts 15:15-19).*

In context, which was the state of sin, Leviticus 18:5 can never mean 'obedience leads to eternal life' (justification, salvation), but can only mean: 'obedience leads to a sanctified life' (sanctification). However, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers pulled Leviticus 18:5 out of its context and gave it the meaning: 'obedience to the law leads to justification' (salvation). Paul wanted to contrast the law-righteousness taught by the Jews (a false teaching) with the faith-righteousness taught in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (the truth)!

c. In the state of righteousness, obedience does lead to a sanctified life⁸⁷. 'Righteousness' and 'life' are never separable. But the righteousness that leads to justification can never be the righteousness of sinful people, but can only be the righteousness of Jesus Christ within the realm of his sinlessness and based on his completed work of salvation. And people cannot earn, buy or steal this righteousness of Christ, but *only receive it by faith* in Christ (5:17-18).

Within the realm of justification by grace through faith, the character of the new life is that it is 'righteous'. Therefore within the new life of those who have been justified by faith it is necessary to live in the way that is 'righteous'. This is taught in Romans 6 to 8. The new (justified and sanctified) life is a life of righteousness in obedience to the commandments of God (6:13-14,16-17,22; 8:4). If a person lives after the flesh he will die, but if he puts to death the misdeeds of the body, he will live (8:13). In the realm of grace and the state of justification, obedience to God's commandments is the way a Christian will live his life.

During the Old Testament period the believer *lives* in the sense that he prospers and prolongs his days in the land⁸⁸. And during the New Testament period the believer *lives* in the sense of enjoying fellowship with God in Christ⁸⁹; he experiences peace that passes all understanding⁹⁰; he rejoices with inexpressible and glorious joy in his salvation by faith⁹¹; he is being transformed to Christ likeness⁹² and he is becoming a blessing for others⁹³.

In the regenerated and renewed realm of saving and sanctifying grace we come back to the combination: "*righteousness (of Christ) → justification (of believers in Christ), that is, approval (by God) → sanctified (holy and righteous) life*". This is also the meaning of the principle in Leviticus 18:5 in the Old Testament context and in Galatians 3:11 in the New Testament context.

In context, Leviticus 18:5 has nothing to do with legalism. Like the context of the Ten Commandments⁹⁴, the context of Leviticus 18 to 20 does not speak about the law as the way to attain righteousness or salvation, but as God's claims on his people who are already righteous or saved! Only *after* God saved or redeemed Israel from their slavery in Egypt, does he give her Ten Commandments as the rule how to live as God's redeemed people. Likewise, in Leviticus 18 to 20, only *because* the Lord is already the God of Israel and Israel is the redeemed people of the Lord, he demands that they keep his commandments as *the rule how to live as God's redeemed people!*

⁸² 1 Peter 3:18

⁸³ cf. Luke 18:9

⁸⁴ Galatians 3:10; James 2:10

⁸⁵ Galatians 2:16

⁸⁶ cf. Isaiah 64:6

⁸⁷ Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:11

⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 5:32-33

⁸⁹ John 17:3

⁹⁰ Philippians 4:7

⁹¹ 1 Peter 1:8

⁹² 2 Corinthians 3:18

⁹³ 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2:8

⁹⁴ Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:11-14 to prove that a person is only justified by faith-righteousness (10:6).

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 says, “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.”

a. The gospel in the Old Testament. *Deuteronomy 30:11-14 is the proclamation of the gospel in Old Testament terms*. Romans 10:4-5 describes *the state of righteousness, which only Jesus Christ earned*. Jesus Christ is the only person in the history of the world who perfectly obeyed and lived by all the commands of the law. Romans 10:6-7 describes *the same state of righteousness, which people must receive* by God’s free grace and through faith in Jesus Christ and not by their efforts to keep the law. Jesus Christ is the only person in the history of the world who is God and yet descended to the lowest parts of this earth and was born as a human on earth. He is the only person in the history of the world who after dying to make atonement for sins was resurrected from the dead. And he is the only person in the history of the world who ascended into heaven to rule over the whole universe. Paul proclaims the New Testament truth (the gospel) in Old Testament terms. He can do this, because he already proved that the way to justification in God’s eyes was the same during the Old Testament period as is now during the New Testament period.

The way to justification has always been ‘justification by faith’ in the context of God’s grace and never ‘justification by the works of the law’ in the context of man’s effort (1:17; 3:21-22; 4:1-3).

The gospel or good news is the message about justification by faith; it is about receiving God’s (Christ’s) righteousness by faith. This righteousness by faith during the Old Testament period is defined in Deuteronomy 30:11-14. It teaches that already during the Old Testament period the truth about what to know, what to believe and what to obey was accessible and near to people. People did not need to do something spectacular like ascending to heaven or travelling across the sea to another country to acquire this truth (10:6-7). The word of God (the gospel or good news in the Old Testament) was on their lips and came into their hearts as they read the Book of Deuteronomy.

The gospel in the Book of Deuteronomy is the following: God was already the God of Israel and Israel was already the people of God⁹⁵. God chose them because he loved them⁹⁶. They had already been saved from slavery⁹⁷. The relationship with God had been established and what God required in this relationship was unconditional love⁹⁸ and service. “What does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear (trust) the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to observe the LORD’s commands and decrees ... for your own good?”⁹⁹. The Promised Land and its blessings was God’s gracious gift to them. Righteousness was and never is the result of the energetic human effort to keep the law. Israel did not receive the Promised Land with all its wealth and its blessings because they earned it with the power of their own hands (religious wars) or earned it with their religious fervour (prayers, fasting, giving or pilgrimages). They received all this on account of the wickedness of the other nations and in spite of the fact that Israel was still a stiff-necked people. God gave them all this because God is gracious and hereby confirmed the covenant promise he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob¹⁰⁰. God predicted that he would raise up the Greatest Prophet, who would speak God’s words and must be obeyed unconditionally¹⁰¹. Israel was a people holy (set apart) to God¹⁰². God would send his curses over people that disobeyed him¹⁰³ and he would send his blessings over people that obeyed him¹⁰⁴. Then Moses summarised the gospel in the Old Testament with the words which Paul quoted¹⁰⁵. During the Old Testament period the righteousness of God was accessible and near to people!

With all these words in the Book of Deuteronomy (the Law) Moses emphasised that the Law was given to Israel, not set in a legalistic framework (in which righteousness or salvation must be earned), but in the context of God’s covenant grace (in which righteousness is received by faith). Righteousness was God’s gracious gift to those who believed during the Old Testament period¹⁰⁶. Righteousness is still God’s gracious gift to those who believe during the New Testament period¹⁰⁷.

⁹⁵ Deuteronomy 4:7-8

⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 7:6-8

⁹⁷ Deuteronomy 5:6

⁹⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4-9

⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 10:12-13; 11:13; cf. Micah 6:8

¹⁰⁰ Deuteronomy 8:17-18; 9:4-6

¹⁰¹ Deuteronomy 18:15-19; cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12

¹⁰² Deuteronomy 26:16-19

¹⁰³ Deuteronomy 27:9-26

¹⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 28:1-14

¹⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 30:11-14

¹⁰⁶ Hebrews 4:1-3a

¹⁰⁷ Ephesians 2:8-9

b. The gospel in the New Testament. Paul *applies* this Old Testament definition of righteousness by faith (the righteousness of God, given by grace and received by faith) to prove that also during the New Testament period the righteousness of God is still accessible and near to people! A person has access to God's righteousness by the first coming of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth (10:6), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (10:7), and by having God's word on his lips and in his heart (10:8). The preaching of the gospel (the good news concerning Jesus Christ) makes God's word or truth concerning righteousness (salvation) available so that a person can know it, believe it with his heart and confess it with his mouth (10:9-10). The gospel is the message concerning Christ's righteousness given by God's love (mercy and grace) and received by man's faith. The gospel is God's power for the salvation of everyone who believes (1:16; cf. 10:4).

f. The word (the gospel) that requires faith and elicits faith is still near to everyone (10:8)

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 is the principle of faith-righteousness that is applied to three events in the New Testament: When Paul says, "The righteousness by faith says" (personification), he means, "The Bible says with reference to *the attainment of righteousness by faith*" that it is accessible and near through three events in the New Testament: *the incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of Christ and the proclamation of Christ.*

a. The accessibility and nearness of righteousness by faith is proved by Christ's incarnation. The Bible teaches: Do not say in your heart: "Who will ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down?" Because the Jews did not believe that Christ (the Messiah) had come down from heaven, they asked with contempt who could ascend to heaven in order to bring Christ down?

Paul insists that the fact that Christ already came down from heaven and lived among people on earth is the visible proof of the accessibility and nearness of God's revelation (and thus of faith-righteousness). Every human effort to ascend to heaven as it were to bring Christ down would be a renunciation of the reality and value of his incarnation. Anybody still trying to climb up to heaven by whatever religious means¹⁰⁸ to find the truth¹⁰⁹, rejects Christ's incarnation. The truth has already come down to earth in the incarnation of Jesus Christ!

b. The accessibility and nearness of righteousness by faith is proved by Christ's resurrection. 'The Abyss' is generally contrasted with the sky and earth and refers to the depth of the sea¹¹⁰. It is commonly pictured as a place deep under the earth, connected to the surface of the earth by a shaft. In Luke 8:31 it is the abode of demons (hell), but here in Romans 10:7 it is the abode of the dead (the grave).

Because the Jews did not believe that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead¹¹¹, they asked with contempt who could descend into the abode of the dead in order to bring Christ up?

Every human effort to descend into the grave as it were to bring Christ out of the dead would be a renunciation of the true nature and significance of his death and resurrection. Paul maintains that we do not need to go down to the realm of the dead to find the truth any more than we need to go up to heaven for the same purpose. As Christ came from heaven to earth so also did he come again from the grave (the lower parts of the earth) and manifested himself to many people as resurrected and alive¹¹²! The truth is already present with us as a living reality in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Only Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteous requirement of God. What Paul wants to say is that the task of fulfilling the righteous requirement of God for justification (becoming a Christian) and sanctification (remaining a Christian), that is, for salvation from beginning to end, was never the task assigned to any man or prophet on earth. This task was assigned only to Jesus Christ. And only he fulfilled the task!

Only he descended from heaven (10:6)¹¹³. Only he was God that took on the human nature¹¹⁴. Only he suffered the agonies of hell in our place¹¹⁵ and died as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins (3:25), so that we may be declared righteous by faith. Only he was raised from the deep place of the dead (10:7) so that we may be able to live the new and holy life (6:4). Only he ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God, so that we may have him as our King and Lord (10:9). As Lord, he works out our salvation from its beginning (at rebirth and justification) throughout our lives (through healing, deliverance, renewal and sanctification) to its end (at his second coming and the resurrection of our bodies). Only Jesus Christ is the guarantee of our salvation (8:29-30)¹¹⁶!

No human being contributed anything to the birth of Christ or the resurrection of Christ. No human being can contribute anything to his own salvation or the salvation of others! No human being can keep the law and think that it could accomplish the same righteousness as the righteousness Jesus Christ earned by his incarnation, death and resurrection!

¹⁰⁸ cf. 1 Thessalonians 6:16

¹⁰⁹ cf. John 14:6

¹¹⁰ Psalm 33:7; 107:26

¹¹¹ Matthew 27:62-66; 28:1-15

¹¹² Ephesians 4:9-10

¹¹³ John 3:13,31

¹¹⁴ John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:5-8

¹¹⁵ Matthew 27:46

¹¹⁶ cf. Philippians 1:6

Only Jesus Christ was delivered over to death for our sins (4:25a)¹¹⁷ and was raised to life for our justification (4:25b)¹¹⁸. Only Jesus Christ accomplished everything necessary for our complete and perfect justification (salvation)!

c. The accessibility and nearness of righteousness by faith is proved by the proclamation of the gospel. The word (the gospel) that requires faith and elicits faith is still near to everyone (10:8).

What is the word that evokes faith and requires faith as a response? Romans 10:8 is a quotation of Deuteronomy 30:14 with slight variation. In this case, Paul specifies what 'the word' is. He quotes Deuteronomy 30:14a, "The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart". Paul is thinking of the 'word' as the gracious promises and exhortations in the Book of Deuteronomy. The word was the gospel or good news in the Old Testament, which Moses and the prophets proclaimed. It evoked faith in the Israelites and required faith of the Israelites as a response. All these words in the Book of Deuteronomy were given to Israel in the context of God's grace.

Paul elaborates this 'word' (the gospel in the Old Testament) in Deuteronomy 30:14 as "the word of faith that we are constantly proclaiming" (the gospel in the New Testament). He directly *applies* 'the word' in the Old Testament revelation to 'the word' in the New Testament revelation. 'The word of faith' is not the word which believers utter, but is the gospel message to which faith is directed. The message of the gospel brings faith into the heart of the believer so that he can believe it and into his mouth so that he can confess it! *'The word of faith' is the gospel or good news recorded in the New Testament, which the apostles proclaimed and Christians are still proclaiming today (10:8). It is 'the word of Christ' (10:17), that is, the message about Jesus Christ, which Jesus Christ himself speaks and sends to people through Christians and which brings the gospel into the hearts and mouths of people who are becoming believers.*

Thus, the gospel is the same in the Old Testament (cf. 3:21)¹¹⁹ and in the New Testament! The word of faith evokes faith in the heart: it must start in the regenerated heart. And the word of faith requires faith as a response: it must be confessed with the mouth. Thus, if a person confesses with his mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord because he genuinely believes in his heart that God raised him from the dead, he will be saved (justified)(10:9-10)! *God's word (the gospel message) leads to justification by faith in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The way of justification (salvation) is the same in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. God's word was close to the people during the Old Testament period, in their mouth and in their heart as they read the words in the Book of Deuteronomy. And God's word is still close to the people during the New Testament period, in their heart and on their lips as they hear the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and read the Gospel in the New Testament. The Gospel of Mark had already been written between A.D. 44-46 in Rome for the people in Rome. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans in the spring A.D. 57 from Corinth for the church in Rome.*

In summary: Righteousness that comes by faith was already available and accessible during the Old Testament revelation through the Book of Deuteronomy. Righteousness that comes by faith is also available and accessible during the New Testament revelation through Christ's incarnation and resurrection, and through the proclamation of the gospel. Thus, in the whole Bible, from beginning to end, people were and still are justified only by faith!

g. Justification (salvation) comes only through faith in the heart
that is confessed with the mouth (10:9-10)

Justification (salvation) comes only when the gospel is received by faith in the heart and confessed with the mouth. Verse 9 uses the order 'mouth-heart' because Moses used that order¹²⁰. In verse 10 Paul uses the order 'heart-mouth' because that is the natural order. "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks¹²¹."

Summaries of the gospel. In the New Testament there are several different ways of summarising the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul stresses that 'the gospel according to the Scriptures' is the death of Christ for our sins and his resurrection on the third day. A person is saved when he hears the preaching of the gospel, receives it, takes his stand on it and holds firmly to it.

In Romans 10:9-13 Paul stresses that the gospel is the incarnation, the resurrection and the enthronement of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God who descended as Man onto the earth (10:6)¹²²; he died and was resurrected (10:7) and he ascended into heaven where he was enthroned as Lord (10:9-10). It is essential to believe that God raised Christ from the dead, because the resurrection proves that Jesus is truly Lord (1:3-4)¹²³.

¹¹⁷ John 1:29

¹¹⁸ John 6:39-40

¹¹⁹ Galatians 3:6-9

¹²⁰ Deuteronomy 30:14

¹²¹ Matthew 12:34

¹²² John 1:1,14

¹²³ Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9-11

The word 'Lord'¹²⁴ is the New Testament Greek translation for the Old Testament Hebrew for 'LORD'¹²⁵, which literally means: 'I AM WHO I AM'¹²⁶. In the Old Testament God expressed himself visibly in the Angel of the LORD without a human body and in flames of fire¹²⁷. In the New Testament he expressed himself visibly in Jesus Christ with a human body¹²⁸! Jesus Christ is God over all (9:5)¹²⁹ The term 'the Son of God' has only spiritual meaning and expresses the fact that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God¹³⁰.

The need to respond to the gospel. A person is saved when he hears the gospel, believes the gospel in his heart and confesses the gospel with his mouth (for example: he calls on the name of the Lord)(10:13). The heart is the seat of a person's religious consciousness and determines what he is spiritually and morally¹³¹. To believe with the heart is to embrace all the above truth with his mind, will and emotions!

However, this definition does not teach that 'confession with the mouth' with regard to salvation has the same effect as 'faith in the heart'. Confession with the mouth without faith in the heart would be in vain¹³² and faith in the heart without confession with the mouth would not be genuine¹³³. Faith in the heart is absolutely indispensable for salvation¹³⁴. Faith in the heart is the empty hand that receives God's salvation by grace. And confession with the mouth, just like good works, is the evidence of genuine faith in the heart (12:1-2; 14:17)¹³⁵.

'To confess' with the mouth is to acknowledge or declare publicly to family, friends and others that Jesus Christ is your personal Lord and King, the One who controls your whole life. People who really believe cannot help speaking what they have seen or heard¹³⁶!

The result is justification and salvation. In Romans 5:9 the beginning of the process of becoming God's child is described as 'justification' (forgiveness of all sins, salvation from the punishment, pollution and power of sins) and the completion of the same process is described as 'salvation' (salvation from God's eternal wrath in the present and after the final judgement). In Romans 5:9 'salvation' is more inclusive than 'justification'.

But in Romans 10:9-10 'justification' means the same as 'salvation', because they are used interchangeably with respect to confessing Christ. Therefore these two verses do not teach that a person must make two separate responses in order to be saved. They rather teach that the one true response a person must make to the gospel is to believe with his heart and to express that belief with his mouth. Faith in his heart is the instrument whereby a person receives God's (Christ's) righteousness and confession with his mouth verifies and confirms that faith in his heart. The genuineness of the faith in his heart will be shown by the confession of his mouth. Confession with the mouth verifies and confirms the faith of the heart.

h. Assurance of salvation in Old Testament and New Testament (10:11)

Salvation is for anyone who trusts. The gospel is available to everyone: to Jews (the people of the nation of Israel) and the Gentiles (the people from all the other nations)! First Paul said that a person who trusts in Christ will never be put to shame (9:33). That promise was first made to the people of Israel in the Old Testament¹³⁷. But now in the New Testament Paul adds his own emphasis and says that 'anyone' who trusts in Christ, no matter whether he is a Jew or a Gentile, will never be put to shame! Therefore God's promise in the Old Testament was intended, not only for Israel, but for people in all the nations of the world¹³⁸!

This was a very difficult truth for Jews to accept. Does Paul really announce that the Jews, who were the very privileged descendants of Abraham, were nothing better in God's eyes than the Gentiles? This is also a difficult truth for certain Christians who have always believed that the natural nation of Israel or Jews were God's chosen people and that God still has a special programme in the future for the natural nation of Israel. On the whole these Jews and Christians have based their theories on the Old Testament revelation without looking at the fulfilment in the New Testament.

i. Salvation is for Jew and Gentile without distinction (10:12-13).

¹²⁴ G: kurios

¹²⁵ H: JaHWeH

¹²⁶ Exodus 3:14; John 8:24

¹²⁷ Exodus 3:2-15

¹²⁸ John 14:9; Hebrews 1:3

¹²⁹ cf. John 1:1; Colossians 1:19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20)(cf. John 5:18; 8:19; 10:30,33,38; 12:44-45; 14:9-10; 15:23; 16:1!

¹³⁰ John 14:9; 19:7; 20:28,31; Colossians 1:15; cf. Matthew 26:6-64

¹³¹ Proverbs 4:23

¹³² Matthew 7:21-23; Titus 1:16

¹³³ Matthew 10:32-33; John 12:42-43; 1 John 2:23; 4:15; 2 John 7

¹³⁴ John 3:18,36

¹³⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:13; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:17-22; 2 Peter 1:5-11; 1 John 3:18-20

¹³⁶ Acts 4:20; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 John 4:15

¹³⁷ Isaiah 28:16

¹³⁸ cf. Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 49:6; 2 Corinthians 1:20

Salvation is for everyone without distinction (10:12). There is no longer any difference between Jew and Gentile, because ‘the shadows’ of the truth in the Old Testament (revealed to the Jews) has become ‘the realities’ of the truth in the New Testament (revealed also to the Gentiles)¹³⁹.

The overwhelming light of the New Testament revelation clearly teaches that from the first coming of Jesus Christ onwards God no longer makes any distinction between the natural nation of Israel and the other natural Gentile nations in the world! During the Old Testament period, the Jews were only saved by faith in *the Messiah that was still come*¹⁴⁰. The Jews, who did not believe, were rejected¹⁴¹. During the Old Testament period also the Gentiles, who believed in the LORD, were added to God’s Old Testament people¹⁴². During the New Testament period, not only Jews, but also Gentiles are only saved by faith in *the Messiah that has come*. Those who believe are added to God’s one and only people (1:17; 2:11; 3:10-18,22-24,29-30; 4:9-12; 5:18-19; 9:24; 10:12; 11:32)¹⁴³. But those who do not believe are rejected¹⁴⁴.

The New Testament Church therefore does not terminate or displace God’s Old Testament people, Israel. In the New Testament period, Israel is *continued* on a higher plane (cf. the twelve apostles and the many Jews that became Christians) and is *enlarged to incorporate* believers from all the other nations in the world¹⁴⁵. Note that the believers in Israel are called ‘Church’ in the Old Testament¹⁴⁶ and the Gentile believers are called ‘Israel’ in the New Testament¹⁴⁷. Together they form one Church, one New Jerusalem¹⁴⁸!

¹³⁹ Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1

¹⁴⁰ Genesis 15:6; Isaiah 53:1-12; Galatians 3:6-9

¹⁴¹ Isaiah 1:9; 10:20-23; Hosea 1:6,9

¹⁴² Isaiah 56:1-8

¹⁴³ 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 3:9,29; 5:6; 6:15; Ephesians 2:14-18; 3:2-6; Colossians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:9-10

¹⁴⁴ John 3:18,36; Revelation 21:8

¹⁴⁵ Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁴⁶ Judges 20:2; Psalm 22:22; 107:32; Chronicles 29:28

¹⁴⁷ Galatians 6:16

¹⁴⁸ Revelation 21:12,14

Paul¹⁴⁹ and Peter¹⁵⁰ repeat this truth about the unity of Old Testament and New Testament believers very clearly:

- because there exists only one true and living God (3:29)¹⁵¹
- because the God who reveals himself in the Bible does not show favouritism (2:11)¹⁵²
- because Christ is the Lord (LORD) of all people in the world, even if they do not acknowledge it (10:12)¹⁵³
- because God is rich towards all his creatures on earth¹⁵⁴
- because Christ saves everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (10:13)¹⁵⁵.

Paul deliberately quotes Joel 2:32 (10:13) to point out that the Old Testament taught that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. This is still true during the New Testament period¹⁵⁶. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile with respect to sin and condemnation on the one hand (3:9,19,23), and with respect to the opportunity or method of salvation on the other hand (1:16; 3:22,28-30; 4:11-12; 9:24)! God justifies Jew and Gentile without distinction through faith alone (3:30).

Salvation is for everyone who calls on the name of Jesus Christ (10:13). To call on the name of the Lord refers first of all to the initial prayer of asking Christ to come into one's heart and life. But it also includes the continued worship of the Lord thereafter. The expression 'to call on the name of the Lord' refers to the worship addressed to God, especially supplication¹⁵⁷. It refers to the worship of the God (the LORD) who revealed himself as the Creator and Saviour through the prophets of the Old Testament and especially in Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

What applies to God applies to Christ. Note that Paul takes Old Testament passages, which refer to God without qualification, and apply them to Jesus Christ! This is another proof that the apostle Paul regarded Jesus Christ as God! It was the distinguishing mark of Christians in the New Testament that they called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ¹⁵⁸ and therefore they accorded to Jesus Christ the worship that belonged to God alone¹⁵⁹!

Because there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, the gospel must be proclaimed to everybody. It must be proclaimed to Jews and it must be proclaimed to Gentiles, so that as many as possible may be saved¹⁶⁰.

(II) 10:14-21. God's rejection of unbelieving Israel was not arbitrary.

10:14. How, then, can they call (vsam) on one in whom they have no faith (viaa) in? And how can they have faith (vsaa) in one whom¹⁶¹ they have not heard (viaa)? And how can they hear (vsaa) without a preacher (vppa)?

10:15. And how can they preach (vsaa) unless they have been sent (vsap)? As it is written (virp), "How beautiful (seasonable)¹⁶² (are) the feet of those who bring good news (vppm)!"

10:16. But not all (the Israelites) submitted (subjected themselves, obeyed) (viaa) to the good news. For Isaiah says (vipa), 'Lord, who has believed (viaa) our message (report, what is heard)¹⁶³?'

10:17. Consequently¹⁶⁴, faith (comes) from hearing the message (from what is heard)¹⁶⁵; and the message (is heard) through the word of Christ¹⁶⁶.

a. The historical sequence of the process of salvation (10:14-15a).

Romans 10:14 does not ask: "How can they believe *the one about whom* (G: peri hou) they have not heard?" It asks: "How can they believe *the one whom* (G: hou) they have not heard?" In the proclamation of the gospel, it is *not merely an encounter with knowledge about Jesus Christ, but an encounter with Jesus Christ himself!* Note what God says in Luke 9:35, "This is my Son, who I have chosen; hear him (Greek: autou akouete), not merely about him."

But because that personal encounter with Jesus cannot take place unless the gospel is proclaimed by Christians and unless people hear the gospel message about Jesus Christ, who he is and what he did. Because people in all the nations must hear the gospel, the gospel must be proclaimed to all the nations. The historical sequence of the process of salvation is here seen from the human point of view and in reversed order (the result is mentioned first and the cause

¹⁴⁹ Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 3:6; Colossians 3:11

¹⁵⁰ 1 Peter 2:9-10

¹⁵¹ Isaiah 43:10-11; 45:22

¹⁵² Acts 10:28,34-35

¹⁵³ cf. Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 17:14

¹⁵⁴ Haggai 2:8; Psalm 50:10-12

¹⁵⁵ Joel 2:32; cf. Acts 4:12

¹⁵⁶ Acts 2:21

¹⁵⁷ Genesis 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25

¹⁵⁸ Acts 9:14,21; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:22

¹⁵⁹ Matthew 14:33; 28:9,17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38; Revelation 5:6-14

¹⁶⁰ cf. Corinthians 9:22

¹⁶¹ G: peri hou

¹⁶² G: hóraios

¹⁶³ G: akoé

¹⁶⁴ G: ara

¹⁶⁵ G: akoé

¹⁶⁶ G: rématos Christou

second).

The gospel must be proclaimed, heard and believed in the sense that a personal encounter with Jesus Christ takes place. Although the Jews are here especially in view (10:1-3,19,21; 11:1), this process of salvation is true for Jews and Gentiles¹⁶⁷.

b. The authorised messengers of the good news (10:15b).

Messengers of the Lord are sent and derive their authority only from their Sender and their faithfulness to his message. “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me”¹⁶⁸.

The people, who have not been called and have not been sent, should read Jeremiah 23:9-32. There are so-called prophets who never stood in the council of the LORD to hear his word. God did not send them and God did not speak to them. And yet they have prophesied. They speak visions and dreams from their own mind, they are lying prophets who prophesy the delusions of their own minds. They fill people with false hopes. Do not listen to the prophets whom God did not send! The true prophets whom God sent proclaimed God’s words to people so that people turned from their evil ways and deeds; they turned away from their lies, pretence, womanizing, immorality, corruption, anger, hatred, violence, terrorism and murder.

Preachers of the gospel bring great joy to their hearers. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 in which the prophet Isaiah describes the joy of the exiles in Babylon when they heard the good news about their imminent deliverance from exile in Babylon. They are joyful because it is God who shows them grace (favour) by proclaiming this good news to them.

c. Only the minority in Israel responded to the message of good news (10:16).

The good news (the gospel in the Book of Deuteronomy) had been proclaimed to the whole natural nation of Israel. There was nothing wrong with the message, because it was accepted with joy (10:15). When Paul says: “not all submitted to this message” he makes an understatement. By far the majority of Jews did not accept the gospel¹⁶⁹.

In the Hebrew passage¹⁷⁰ from which Romans 10:16 is quoted, the Hebrew word is: ‘shemu’atenu’, which means ‘that which was heard by us’ or ‘that which was revealed to us’, thus ‘our message’ or ‘our report’. We convey to others what was previously revealed to us¹⁷¹.

d. The hearing of the gospel is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ (10:17).

The Bible contains many exhortations to respond to God’s message. “He who has ears, let him hear¹⁷²!” “Consider carefully how you hear”¹⁷³! *‘The word’ which the Jews encountered in the proclamation of the gospel in the Old Testament was nothing less than the word that Christ himself spoke to them¹⁷⁴ and thus was an encounter with Jesus Christ himself!*

The ‘word’ which Jews and Gentiles encounter in the proclamation of the gospel in the New Testament is still the word which Christ himself speaks and thus is an encounter with Jesus Christ himself¹⁷⁵! God the Father said, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; *hear (listen to) him*”¹⁷⁶. He does not say, “Hear about him. And Paul literally says, “How can they believe *in one whom* they have not heard”. He does not say, “How can they believe *in one of (about, concerning) whom* they have not heard”. When the gospel is proclaimed by messengers, people not only *hear about* Jesus Christ, but actually *hear Jesus Christ himself (speaking to their heart and mind)*! When the gospel is proclaimed, people hear “the word of Christ.” Jesus Christ himself speaks to people (10:17)! Thus, hearing the gospel is a personal encounter, not with the preacher, but with Jesus Christ himself! Every person is responsible for what he does with what he hears Jesus Christ is saying to him¹⁷⁷.

Faith is not simply an acknowledgement of certain truths. Faith is rather the personal response to Jesus Christ in the encounter with Jesus Christ. Faith is the obedience to his call to follow him, the risk to take the first step and follow him, the commitment or determination to keep following Jesus Christ and consequently the coming into a situation where trust in Jesus Christ is possible as well as a growing reality. Faith means the relinquishment of every other confidence and the abandonment to Jesus Christ as our only help before we call on his name for salvation¹⁷⁸.

(III) 10:18-21 Israel’s failure to respond to the gospel cannot be excused.

¹⁶⁷ Ephesians 1:13

¹⁶⁸ Luke 10:16; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

¹⁶⁹ Isaiah 53:1; John 1:11; 1 Corinthians 10:5, Romans 9:27; 10:21

¹⁷⁰ Isaiah 53:1

¹⁷¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

¹⁷² Matthew 11:15; 13:9,43; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9

¹⁷³ Luke 8:18

¹⁷⁴ cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12

¹⁷⁵ John 3:34; 5:47; 6:63,68; 17:8; Acts 5:20; Ephesians 5:26; 6:17; 1 Peter 1:25; cf. Romans 10:14

¹⁷⁶ Luke 9:35

¹⁷⁷ Luke 8:4-15

¹⁷⁸ Psalm 116:3-4; Jonah 2:2

10:18. But I ask (vipa): “Have they not heard (viaa)?” (Greek: A question starting with ‘mé’ expects a positive answer).

On the contrary¹⁷⁹ (i.e. Of course, they did!). “Their voice (sound/vibration of a musical instrument)¹⁸⁰ went out (viaa) into all the earth and their words¹⁸¹ to the ends of the inhabited world¹⁸².”

10:19. But I ask (vipa): “Did Israel not understand¹⁸³ (viaa)?” First, Moses says (vipa), “I will make you envious (vifa) of a non-nation. And with a senseless¹⁸⁴ nation will I make you angry (vifa)¹⁸⁵.”

10:20. And Isaiah is so bold (vipa) as to say (vipa), “I was found (viap) by those who did not seek (vppa) me; I made (viad) visible (i.e. revealed) myself to those who did not ask (vppa) for me’.

10:21. But concerning Israel he says (vipa), “All day long I have stretched out¹⁸⁶ (viaa) my hands to a people who are continually disobedient (vppa) and continually obstinate/contradicting (to speak against, contradict; to oppose, refuse; to be obstinate)(vppa)¹⁸⁷.”

While Romans 10:14-17 teaches that some people will respond in faith to the proclamation of the gospel, Romans 10:18-21 teaches that *other people will not respond to the proclamation of the gospel*. This happened in the Old Testament period of the prophets¹⁸⁸ and in the New Testament period of Jesus and the apostles¹⁸⁹. The good news was proclaimed, but not all the Israelites accepted the good news¹⁹⁰.

At this point, Paul returns to his subject in Romans chapters 9 to 11, and explains the unbelief and disobedience of the great majority of the natural nation of Israel. *The nation of Israel certainly heard the gospel, but the great masses of Israel rejected it (10:16,18). They certainly knew God’s purpose with respect to the Gentiles, but obstinately continued to disobey God. As the New Testament shows, history unfolded exactly as the Old Testament prophets had predicted it would happen. The unbelieving Jews only have themselves to blame for rejecting God and his Messiah. Therefore God’s consequent rejection of the unbelieving Jews was certainly not arbitrary (10:19-21).*

a. Israel heard the message (10:18).

The Jews cannot make the excuse that they did not hear the message. They heard the message of faith already in the first five books of Moses¹⁹¹. While Psalm 19:1-6 speaks of God’s *general revelation* through his works of creation and providence, Psalm 19:7-14 speaks of God’s *special revelation* through his Old Testament Books. God’s general and special revelations are complementary¹⁹². God’s general revelation was proclaimed throughout human history without distinction to Jews and Gentiles (1:19-20; 2:15)¹⁹³.

God’s special revelation was proclaimed throughout the Old Testament period in the Old Testament Books mainly to Israel (cf. 3:21-22) and throughout the New Testament period in the gospel to Jews and Gentiles without distinction¹⁹⁴. The gospel was proclaimed from Jerusalem to all of Judea, Samaria and Galilee and even to other countries where Jews lived¹⁹⁵! Already during the lifetime of the apostles the gospel spread fast and far across the known world (15:22-24)¹⁹⁶. *Through the proclamation of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world, the pattern of God’s general revelation has now also become the pattern of God’s special revelation!*

b. Israel understood the message (10:19).

The Jews cannot make the excuse that they did not understand the message. *It was not their ignorance, but rather their disobedience and stubborn unwillingness (10:21) that caused their unbelief*. The nation of Israel had received sufficient knowledge and understanding about the way of salvation in order to make them fully accountable for their unbelief.

Moses was the first to bear witness that God’s message would provoke Israel to anger. Nothing was more forceful to Israel than the appeal to the words of Moses¹⁹⁷. The song of Moses appears in a context in which Israel is upbraided for

¹⁷⁹ G: menoungé

¹⁸⁰ G: fthonggos

¹⁸¹ G: rémata

¹⁸² Psalm 19:4

¹⁸³ G: ginóskó

¹⁸⁴ G: asunetos

¹⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 32:21b

¹⁸⁶ G: ek-petannumi ex-epetassa

¹⁸⁷ G: anti-legó. Isaiah 65:2

¹⁸⁸ Isaiah 53:1

¹⁸⁹ John 5:47

¹⁹⁰ Hebrews 2:1; 4:1-2

¹⁹¹ cf. Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:8; Deuteronomy 30:11-14; Romans 10:6-8

¹⁹² Acts 17:24-31

¹⁹³ Psalm 19

¹⁹⁴ Matthew 28:19; 24:14

¹⁹⁵ Acts 1:8

¹⁹⁶ Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 1:6; John 12:19; Acts 2:41,47; 4:4; 17:6

¹⁹⁷ cf. Luke 16:29-31; John 5:45-47

its unfaithfulness and perversity. Paul deals with this same context. Because Israel had exchanged the Living God for their idols, God had exchanged the (natural) nation of Israel for “what was no nation” (for a nation of Gentiles). God would give Israel’s privileges to “a nation that had no previous understanding” of the gospel.

This ‘nation’ would be God’s New Testament people consisting mainly of Gentiles¹⁹⁸. Jesus had warned Israel that the Kingdom of God would be taken away from Israel and would be given to a people that bear the fruit of the Kingdom¹⁹⁹. Paul and Barnabas said that the gospel would first be proclaimed to the Jews. But since they rejected it, the apostles would proclaim it to the Gentiles²⁰⁰. The privileged position that was first given by grace to Israel would now be given by grace to the Gentiles, whom the Jews despised.

Thus, since the time of Moses (1407 B.C.) Israel already knew that God had planned to extend his revelation and consequently his salvation to the Gentiles²⁰¹! Israel knew that God would enlarge his people to include the believers from all Gentile nations (740-680 B.C.)²⁰²! The history of the Old Testament and the New Testament unfolded exactly as the prophets had predicted it would happen²⁰³.

c. Israel is passed by due to her disobedience and obstinacy (10:20).

Paul already quoted Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 and applied them to the Gentiles in Romans 9:25-26. Here Paul quotes Isaiah 65:1 and applies it to the Gentiles in Romans 10:20.

During the Old Testament period, the Jews enjoyed the privilege of finding the LORD even when they did not seek him. Now during the New Testament period, the Gentiles (and the Jews, if they want to) enjoy this privilege! Paul quotes the free and merciful grace of the LORD to Israel during the Old Testament period and applies it to the Gentile nations during the New Testament period!

The truth that God was now revealing himself to the Gentiles and that God was found by the Gentiles was a truth that many Jews simply could not believe and could not accept, even until today. The fact that strangers and aliens would become a part of God’s covenant people²⁰⁴ angered the Jews. *The by-product of spreading the gospel to all the nations in the world is the provocation and angering of the natural nation of Israel (11:14) and of nations with a religion like that of the Jews.* This truth emphasises that neither the Jews nor any other nation or individual can make a natural claim on the living God! God has the sovereign right to turn to whomever he wants!

d. Israel remains responsible for rejecting God and his Messiah (10:21).

In Romans 10:20-21 Paul contrasts the favour shown to the Gentiles with the disobedience of Israel. For a very long time Israel had a privileged position. With unimaginable patience God had held out his hands to her, but she was a disobedient and obstinate people, who continually provoked God to his face. The seriousness of Israel’s sin is expressed by the fact that God’s patience and loving-kindness was not simply made to ordinary people, but to a constantly disobedient and obstinate people. The natural nation of Israel is completely responsible for the judgement God pronounced over her in the Old Testament²⁰⁵ and for the judgement Jesus pronounced over her in the New Testament²⁰⁶. So now, that is, since the first coming of Christ, God has turned towards the Gentile nations.

Nevertheless, the message of the Bible is still for Gentiles and for Jews. “If you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (10:9; cf. 11:23)!” There is equal hope for the nation of Israel as there is for any other Gentile nation on earth.

Summary. Romans chapter 10 deals with the failure of Israel. Their zeal was not according to knowledge; they were ignorant of God’s righteousness and did not subject themselves to it. They did not respond to the gospel by faith and obedience. Instead, they continued to be disobedient and contradicting even in the face of God’s constant long-suffering and loving-kindness. Israel cannot be excused, because they heard the gospel. They knew beforehand the design of God with respect to the call of the Gentiles. They had been forewarned about the situation which now existed in Paul’s time and with which he was concerned in the letter to the Romans. However, the last word concerning God’s loving-kindness to Israel is spoken in Romans chapter 11.

¹⁹⁸ 1 Peter 2:9-10

¹⁹⁹ Matthew 21:42-44; 8:11-12

²⁰⁰ Acts 13:46-48

²⁰¹ Genesis 22:17-18

²⁰² Isaiah 42:6; 49:6

²⁰³ Acts 13:47

²⁰⁴ Isaiah 49:6; 56:1-8

²⁰⁵ Isaiah 65:1-3

²⁰⁶ Matthew 23:37-38