

Before we study our text in Romans today... I would like for you to acknowledge something with me... that might make our study a little easier. ... Wouldn't you agree that: *a true Christian lives a life of contradiction*...? ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

As believers... we are called to be people who believe the unbelievable... forgive the unforgivable... love the unlovable... be willing to give up our own will... become weak to be strong ... and find love by giving it away.

*A true Christian life is full of contradiction* ! The phenomenon of paradox lies at the very heart of every true Christian. ... If you agree... (then) perhaps you would not be *apprehensive*... when we study our Bibles and are confronted with a "*theology of paradox*." ... Now... be careful before you say... "*Pastor... my theology is not challenged by any apparent contradictions or elements of absurdity...*"

Only the most arrogant person would say, "*I can... and I must understand all the mysteries and working of God.*" ... (Listen!) A god that you can totally wrap your mind around... is not worth having – at all! ... A god that you fully understand... would not even *be* God. ... So let me present you with a "theology of paradox"... without any attempt at reducing it to our limited and imperfect understanding.

It is true that God elects those who will be saved... and it is equally true that man has a free will. ... God sovereignly chooses who will be saved... but (at the same time) man is personally responsible to chose God. ... This is a *theology of paradox* and Scripture presents them to us (side-by-side) in Romans chapters nine and ten. Romans 9 teaches *divine election* — chapter 10 teaches *human responsibility*. ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

The last time we were together... in our study of Romans...we had just completed the ninth chapter. The Apostle Paul carries over into chapter ten... what he began in chapter 9... He is answering THIS question: *If Israel (with all its immense spiritual privilege) is rejecting the Messiah... then has God's word has failed?*

We saw in chapter 9 that Paul's answer was “No”... because throughout their history God had repeatedly demonstrated that He operates by His sovereign election. ... Isaac had been chosen over Ishmael... and Jacob over Esau. ... God is the potter... humanity is the clay... and God can do as He pleases. God has mercy on whom He will... and whom He wills... He hardens. ... Some are vessels for wrath... others for mercy. ... It is all about God's Own glory in His decision to save some and pass by others.

Now... as we open chapter 10 today... the Apostle Paul (paradoxically) writes that the Jewish majority who rejected Christ... did not do this because of God's election... (In other words... they did not reject Messiah... because they didn't happen to be a part of God's elect.) Chapter 10 develops the principle that they failed in their own responsibility. The blame is on themselves.

Here is a quick preview. Look how Paul concludes chapter 10:

**Romans 10:21 (ESV)**

*<sup>21</sup> But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”*

Before we get to this verse... we are going to see what God was offering... (in other words)... what this disobedient and contrary people refused to take. ... We will also see why they refused it. ... And let me warn you now:

There are still a lot of religious people in the church today... who are making the same wrong decision. – They refuse to take what is needed from God. ... They stubbornly follow their own wrong path. ... Man must chose God's way.

Paul will show us why Israel rejected what God offered them... and then Paul will spell-out (very clearly) how anyone can take... what God holds out.

But first... please notice what Paul's heart is. He certainly did not have a cold and indifferent resignation to God's sovereign election. He does not just say: "Oh well... I guess they'll just miss out. It's all part of God's will... you know..." (LISTEN!)... No one who believes the truth of divine election should think like that. – How sad (!) that some mis-guided believers do...

### **Romans 10:1**

No one understood the doctrine of election better than the Apostle Paul. And yet... he must have felt that his praying for God to save Israel... was (somehow) consistent with God's sovereign election. (God had already decided that only a few would be saved.) ... .. Earlier this week as I studied this... I wondered "*why does Paul pray like this?*" *Isn't it useless... foolish... or even presumptuous...?* ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

Then I thought about my own praying for our community and our nation. Should I not pray for revival in our land... because Scripture has revealed that "*many are called but few are chosen*" (Matthew 22:14) ? ... No! It is not our responsibility to try to figure out who God's elect are... and then go and give the Gospel only to them. Instead... we are to proclaim the good news of the Gospel to anyone who will hear it... and then pray with the

same kind of diligence that we see Paul pray with (*here.*) We are to diligently testify... and fervently intercede. ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

Now... lets see why Israel (and others today) reject God's offer.

### **Romans 10:2**

What hindered the Jews finding 'salvation'? Remarkably it was (Paul says) 'zeal for God.' ... But it was 'zeal' - 'not according to knowledge.' ... "A zeal for God" is a great thing so long as it is rightly directed. ... But it is a tragic thing... if it drives a person along a wrong religious road.

Ever since returning from the Babylonian captivity... the Jews had been responding to their discipline that God put them through. They never again wanted to fall into national apostasy... and suffer (as they did in Babylon) another time! ... So... in the temple and the local synagogues... only the true God was worshiped and served... and only the true Law was taught. ... So zealous were the Jews... that they even sought to "improve" God's Law. They added their own requirements and traditions... making them equal to the Law. ... But their zeal was not based on knowledge - it was heat without light.

Sad to say... many religious people today are making the same mistake. They think that their good works and religious deeds will save them... when actually these practices are keeping them from being saved. ... Certainly many of them are sincere and devout... but sincerity and devotion will never save the soul.

Romans 10:2 is in direct opposition to the none-sense that I am sure you have heard many times: "*You know... it doesn't matter what you believe...*

*as long as you are sincere...* ... In our mindless and pluralistic all-accepting society... we are supposed to be open to everyone's version of the truth. ... But Romans 10:2 teaches that the religiously zealous are not saved by zeal alone. ... You can be sincere – but sincerely wrong!  
... [ P A U S E ] ...

Now I need to say something here that is very important. Knowledge and sound doctrine often get a bad rap in the church today. Many are thinking: *"Head knowledge feeds pride... and doctrine divides believers. Let's just not make it a big deal... so we can all get along..."* ... .. But Romans 10:2 places a very high priority on knowledge. It makes it a big deal! ... So I need to take a little time here...

(LISTEN!) Christianity is primarily a teaching faith. ... It is (and always) has been. ... In fact... this was the primary thrust of Jesus' three-year ministry. You say, *"But didn't Jesus come to do miracles and prove that He is God?"* No. He did that... but his primary ministry was to teach them the way of salvation... and to provide for it by himself dying for sin and then rising from the dead.

There is an excellent example of this in the first two chapters of Mark's Gospel. The first chapter of that Gospel tells us that John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance... and that after John was put in prison... Jesus picked up the teaching ministry by "proclaiming the good news of God" (Mark 1:14). ... This theme carries on throughout the chapter.

Mark 1:21 tells us that Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum... where *"Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach..."* The next verse says that *"the people were amazed at his teaching because he taught them*

*as one who had authority...."* Later we find the people exclaiming, "*What is this? A new teaching—and with authority!*" (v. 27). **Teaching** is prominent in the chapter.

Then... (verse 29)... Jesus was brought to the home of Peter... whose mother-in-law was sick... and Jesus healed her. ... The word of the healing soon spread... and before long a large crowd of diseased people had gathered at the door... and Jesus healed them. Night came. Everyone went to sleep. But early in the morning... while everyone else was sleeping... Jesus got up and went out to a solitary place where he prayed.

Soon the disciples also got up... and by this time the crowd of sick people had regathered at Peter's house. ... The crowd was probably even larger than the night before. ... So when his disciples realized that Jesus was not in the house... they went looking for Him... and when they found Him they protested... "*Everyone is looking for you!*" (v. 37). They meant, "*What are you doing out here? This is your great opportunity. Your healing of the sick has been a huge success.*"

Jesus didn't return to Capernaum. Instead He replied... (Now get this...)

**Mark 1:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> *And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came."*

Wasn't it important to heal the sick? ... Perhaps. It was certainly a good thing to heal them.... But it was not as important to heal - as it was to teach... and in this case the pressure to heal the sick was beginning to **detract** from Jesus' teaching ministry. ... Jesus abandoned the healing ministry... in order to pursue the teaching ministry. He had come to teach...

and he was determined that nothing would keep him from that all-important work.

It was the same with the apostles in the early days of the church. In those days there was a problem with the administration of money for the widows. But rather than dealing with it themselves... the apostles asked the church to elect deacons to oversee the work... because (they said) "*It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables*" (Acts 6:2).

Paul did miracles. We are told about some of them in Acts. He also spoke in tongues (according to 1 Cor. 14:18). ... But in the next verse... he said (look at this)...

**1 Corinthians 14:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> *Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

Why did Jesus... the apostles... and Paul concentrate on teaching? ... Clearly... (the answer is) because Christianity must be according to right knowledge. ... I am sometimes criticized that I emphasize "teaching" too much in my sermons. Now you know why I will never apologize for it. It is necessary to our Christianity. We must have zeal - with knowledge.

The Jewish nation rejected the Messiah because they had zeal without knowledge. Another reason was because of their pride and self-righteousness. They would not submit to God's plan.

**Romans 10:3-4**

Rather than living by faith in God... the Jews established customs and traditions (in addition to God's law)... to try to make themselves acceptable in God's sight. ... But human effort... no matter how sincere... can never substitute for the righteousness God offers us by faith. We can only hold out our empty hands... and receive salvation as a gift.

The Jews failed to see that Jesus was the completion of the Law. The Law pointed to Him... and He was its end. Israel was ignorant of this... not because they had never been told... but because they refused to learn. ... An attentive study of their own Scriptures would have led them to the true knowledge of the Messiah and his righteousness... for example - Isaiah 53. ... Theirs was an ignorance that stemmed from willful... stubborn... resistance to the truth. They would not submit to God. ... They were proud of their own good works and religious self-righteousness.

They were like a woman dying of cancer... who goes about her life as though nothing is wrong. She is sure everything is all right with her... because her face looks good when she puts on her makeup. So every day she puts on her make-up... and never sees a doctor so he can detect the disease and treat it.

And this is exactly many people's folly (today.) Millions of spiritually dying people are willfully ignorant of their true condition. They are trusting their efforts to paint over the surface of their lives - with human morality. Some suppose that if they have been baptized... or take communion regularly... they must be all right with God... failing to see that these things do not add-up to God's righteousness. ... Other people try the same approach by giving money... or by giving their time to volunteer causes. They wrongly



assume that these acts of righteousness... add up to God's righteousness. They are very satisfied with what they have done... and they suppose that God must be satisfied - too. ... They fail to see that they are spiritually dying men and women. ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

So... these are the reasons why Israel (and others today) reject what God holds out to them all day long. ... As Paul (now) reveals what God is holding out. ... He wants to make sure that what we have taken... is actually what God is offering. (Many believers have a false confidence.) ... So Paul presents two FALSE spiritual dependencies. ... (These are mistaken Spiritual emphases)... followed by what our spiritual dependency NEEDS TO BE. These three spiritual systems... you will recognize as existing in churches today... when there is zeal without knowledge.

The three dependencies that Christian churches emphasize are **(1)** a faulty spiritual dependence on works... **(2)** a faulty spiritual dependence on miracles and wondrous signs... and **(3)** a PROPER spiritual dependence on faith. ... (Paul is going to discuss all three.) The first that he takes-up (here) is a faulty dependence on works... which he has already been discussing.

### **Romans 10:5**

This is a quote from Leviticus 18:5...

#### **Leviticus 18:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> *You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*

Moses seems to be telling the people that they need to keep the law and that - if they keep it - they will enjoy abundant life. That is true... of course.

... But Moses was talking about a “**HAPPY** LIFE”... not “**ETERNAL** LIFE.” Any life that doesn’t lie... cheat... and steal... and a life that seeks to honor God – tends to be a happy life. ... But no one can be saved by a religion of works... however hard he or she tries. (Moses never said they could!)

We should have no spiritual dependency on works. **(2)** We should have no spiritual dependency on miracles and wonderous signs. (OK... now I’ve really stepped in it!... haven’t I? )

But... I want to be VERY **CLEAR** (here.) ... Do I believe miracles and wonderous signs exist today...? ... “Yes!” God is obviously just as able to do miracles today – as He ever was! He is not bound by anything. ... But I want you to evaluate with me... whether or not Paul is making **THIS** point... which I believe he is (right here): We are not to seek miracles and depend on them. (And when we see these next three verses in their context) – the message is that a dependency on signs and wonders... is just as dangerous... as **(1)** a dependency upon working to earn our salvation. ... Both are often the result of a zeal without knowledge. ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

Here is why I am saying this. Look at what Scripture says...

### **Romans 10:6-8**

Nearly all commentators recognize... the expressions about ascending into heaven to bring Christ down... and descending into the abyss to bring Christ up... are proverbial expressions for what is clearly **impossible**. ... If someone could produce Christ... or His power on demand... bringing Him down from above... or up from below - that person would be a miracle

worker. ... But we are not to look for that... any more than we are to look for an additional revelation.

But perhaps even more important... Paul quotes from Deuteronomy in these verses... and it is essential for us to understand the context of where he quotes from. ... Moses has led Israel as far as he was going to. He is about to go away (forever) from them... so he calls them together and he addresses them. Understandably... the people were filled with anxiety about this new development. Moses had been used by God to do miracles among them to authenticate his message. "*Who is going to lead us when Moses, the miracle worker, is gone?*" they would have been asking. What Moses tells them is that they do not need another miracle worker.

Moses tells them: What they need is not up in heaven... where it requires a miracle-worker who will ascend into heaven to get it. ... Nor is it beyond the vast sea... where someone will need to miraculously go and get it. ... What they need is very near them... in fact... it is already in their mouths and hearts.

**Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (ESV)**

*<sup>11</sup> "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. <sup>12</sup> It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' <sup>13</sup> Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' <sup>14</sup> But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.*

The point is... that Israel had the law... and that the law was all they needed. ... They were not to seek out an additional revelation... (and miraculous authentication)... but rather were to occupy themselves with

obeying what they had already been given. ... We see this same truth (here) in Deuteronomy... and in Romans... and in the Gospel of Luke!

In Luke 16:19-31... Jesus was speaking about a rich man... who ate well every day... and a poor beggar named Lazarus. Both men died. Lazarus was carried into the presence of Abraham in paradise... and the rich man went to hell.

At first the rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus to provide him with some comfort. ... But when that was declared to be impossible... he asked that Lazarus be sent back to earth to warn his five brothers of their impending judgment... since they were as wicked as himself: "*I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.*" ... Abraham answered, "*They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.*" ... The rich man persisted, "*No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.*"

Abraham's final word and the climactic point of the parable was this:

**Luke 16:31 (ESV)**

*<sup>31</sup> He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'*"

This is exactly what Paul has been saying in Romans... of course. ... And it is exactly what Moses was saying in Deuteronomy 30. ... The people had "Moses and the Prophets." That is the word that... according to Moses... was "near" them... in their mouths and hearts.

“*In your mouth*” means the truth you will need is already so familiar and so well-understood... that it is already in your language and common conversation. ... It is found in your mouth - **and in your heart**... meaning: it has been the subject of your reflection and meditation. ... It is so well understood and talked about - that there is no need to search additional revelation that will tantalize you. ... You have **sufficient** revelation!

(1) We should have no spiritual dependency on works. (2) We should have no spiritual dependency on miracles and wonderous signs. ... (3) We **should** only have a spiritual dependency on faith. (And here is what that faith needs to look like.)

### Romans 10:9

Paul is saying that every true believer will have be complete agreement... between what his confession from his mouth says... and what his **life** declares. The mouth and the heart should be in harmony (saying the same thing.)

It is with the heart that you believe. Your "heart" means your total personality... your entire being. ... You see... churches (everywhere) have people who say something with their mouths -- they give lip service to God -- but their hearts are far from Him.

(LISTEN!) When you make a public confession... you had better be VERY CERTAIN that your heart is right along with your words (that you are not just saying empty expressions that mean nothing to you personally.) If there is confession without heart-filled faith... it is due either to self-deception or to hypocrisy.

When we confess that Jesus is Lord... we are acknowledging His rank or supreme place. ... We are pledging our obedience and worship. ... We are placing our life under His protection for safekeeping. ... We are pledging ourselves and our resources to His control for direction and service.

Saving faith always believes that Jesus rose from the dead. Why...? Because the resurrection proves a great many things. It proves: that there is a God and that the God of the Bible is the true God; ... that Jesus was a teacher sent from God and that Jesus was inerrant in his teachings and spoke the very words of God;... that Jesus is the Son of God; ... that there is a day of judgment coming; ... that every believer in Christ is justified from all sin; ... that all who are united to Christ by faith will live again; ... and that Christians can have victory over sin.

### **Romans 10:10**

I hope that no one who is listening to me today thinks that it is even possible to be a “secret Christian”... (that you can be a believer with a “private faith.”) Romans 10:10 says that a personal... private faith does not save anyone. (It says right here)... Confession of Christ... is necessary. ... Faith is necessary to obtain the gift of righteousness. (But... you see)... the faith that saves... is a faith that is not ashamed of Christ! It will confess Him to others!

### **Romans 10:11**

Have you believed on Christ and confessed Him before other people...?  
Have you called on His name?

Remember... works will not save you. You cannot keep the law even if you want to... and God does not owe it to you... to give you miracles that will tickle your religious appetite. Christ has already descended from heaven. He has already told us who God is and what He requires of us. ... Jesus has given His life to pay for your sin. He has already been raised from the dead. Therefore... the gospel is not far off. It is right here. It is in our mouths and in our hearts. All that remains is for you to embrace it personally.

### **Romans 10:12-13**

It does not make any difference who you are or what you may or may not have done. You may be rich or poor... educated or uneducated... Republican or Democrat... advantaged or disadvantaged. You may be passive or highly motivated. You may be religious or not religious at all. You may be moral... or you may be very immoral. ... You may have lived in sin a long time. You may have committed adultery or stolen money. ... You may even have murdered someone. It does not matter. The text says, "*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*"