



Everyone Who Calls & Chooses to Believe in Jesus

What does the Bible have to say about those who call upon the Lord and choose to believe in Jesus?

They Have Not All Chosen to Believe in Jesus

One of the questions I receive occasionally from Christians has to do with why it is that people in their lives whom they love, for whom they pray, and who have heard and understood the simple message of the gospel, still refuse to bend their knee and believe in Jesus Christ. Their hearts are broken because they are deeply concerned for the eternal salvation of their loved ones, and their minds are confused because everything they know to do, they have already done. They have loved; they have prayed; they have tried to allow Christ to be seen in them; they have shared the gospel as best they know how. And all of that without a positive faith response.

In today's scripture passage, Paul is continuing to address the fact of Israel's failure to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and their rejection of Him. You may recall Paul's words in the first three verses of chapter 9.

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut

off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Romans 9:1-3

Again in the first verses of chapter ten, Paul wrote,

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

Romans 10:1

What we are going to hear this morning is Paul's assessment of the fundamental reasons why Israel didn't believe in Jesus. He has already given us two reasons.

1. In Romans 9:30-32, he said that they pursued a righteousness based on works, not on faith.
2. In Romans 10:3, he told us that they were ignorant of the righteousness of God, sought to establish their own, and did not submit to God and his plan of salvation.

This morning Paul continues the discussion.

For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

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

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for
 "Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
 and their words to the ends of the world."

But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,
 "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;
 with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

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

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

Romans 10:11-21

This passage begins with a quotation from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. In fact, in these 11 verses there are no less than ten Old Testament references or direct quotations of Old Testament scriptures!

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as
a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a
sure foundation: *'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'*"

Isaiah 28:16

It is important to understand that the historical context in which God first spoke these words through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 28 was one of warning and impending judgment. As Paul referenced these words, his Jewish readers would have heard them that way. He has already quoted this same text at the close of chapter 9 where he asserted that the Jews stumbled over the stumbling stone. In this case, he is using this one line to make a positive point: while unbelievers stumble over this stumbling stone, those who instead believe in this precious cornerstone, this sure foundation, will not stumble, will not be disappointed or put to shame.

Next he points out that this applies to everyone, whether Jew or Greek—that is, Jew or Gentile. This may sound familiar to you, because Paul uses similar language in his letter to the Galatians where he says that this absence of distinctions is especially and specifically true in the church. Among those who believe,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no
male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are
Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 3:28-29

But here in Romans 10, Paul is not commenting about the church. He is making clear that forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God is universally available to anyone—whether Jew or Gentile—through faith in Jesus Christ.

Each of these first three verses, verses 11-13, refers to Christ, and stresses that Christ is not only easily accessible, but equally accessible to all, to anyone and to everyone, because there is no distinction, no favoritism. Each describes in differing terms both the nature of faith and how Christ responds to believers.

- In verse 11, we trust in Him and we will never be put to shame.
- In verse 12 we call on Him and he richly blesses us.
- In verse 13 we call on the name of the Lord and are saved.

For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:11-13

Everyone Who Calls on the Name of the Lord Will Be Saved



Verse 13 echoes the prophet Joel, who wrote regarding things that will come to pass in the last days:

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.

Joel 2:32

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church, the apostle Peter quoted from this same passage to explain to Jewish observers that what was happening on that day was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

In time, this expression had become so widespread in the church, and characteristic of Christian people, that in his letter to the church in Corinth Paul could describe the worldwide community of believers as, "Those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...

1 Corinthians 1:2

What Does it Mean to "Call on the Name of the Lord?"

It's recorded in Acts 4 that Peter and John were brought before the rulers and elders of the people to give an account for their proclamation of Jesus as Messiah and Lord. In the course of his response, Peter said to them:

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:11-12

So to call upon the name of the Lord is first to recognize who Jesus is, then to acknowledge:

- Who He is
- What He has done
- Our need for him

And then to ask him on that basis to save us from our sin. And when we do that, we are saved. Regardless of who we are, who our parents were, what we have done or not done, on the basis of the promise of God, we are saved. This is what it means to "believe in Jesus."

Paul immediately follows that amazing news with a practical problem. How will the Jews, who have not chosen to believe in Jesus, ever call on him to be saved?

He develops that thought in verses 14-17. As he does, he gives an overview of the work of evangelism, which, simply stated, is the communication of the gospel to those who do not yet know Jesus Christ.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:14-17

I want to begin where Paul ends in this section. At the close of this description of the need for evangelism and the process by which people come to believe in Jesus as their Savior, Paul makes this statement:

Faith Comes Through Hearing the Word of Christ



Implicit to what is required for our justification before God is to have faith awakened in us through hearing the word of Christ. Paul is not simply saying that we need to hear the word *ABOUT* Christ. He is saying that we need to hear Christ himself speaking

personally to us, awakening faith in us through the message of the Gospel. Remember what Paul himself said in Romans 1:16:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

So Paul wants us, his readers, to spend a little time thinking about what is necessary if anyone is going to come to faith in Christ and believe in Jesus. In line with verse 13, Paul says first that:

- **They must call.** That is, they must call on the name of the Lord. Calling on the name of Jesus presupposes that they know His name. And by his name we're not just talking about his given name. I was in a Mexican restaurant in Edmonds with my family a few years ago, and when the check was placed in front of me I was a little startled by something on the receipt. For the past two hours we had been waited on by a server whose name was Jesus (Hay-sooss). So it's not just a name, but *THE* name of Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior, the *ONLY* one who can save us from our sins.
- **They must believe.** *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?* Since belief that leads to salvation is presented as "calling" on the name of Jesus Christ, the kind of belief Paul must have in mind is to believe in Jesus as who He said He is, and that He has accomplished what is necessary for our salvation, which is to have died as the all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins, to have been buried, and to have risen again from the dead.
- **They must hear.** *And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?* For belief to take hold, ignorance has to be overcome. People have to hear the story of Jesus. They need to receive a credible telling of the gospel message.
- **The message must be communicated.** I think so often that our contemporary models for evangelism are far too hurried, far too formulaic, far too lacking in substance. If someone has simply never heard the story, those blanks need to get filled in. We are foolish to assume that everyone has heard the message of the gospel, so that all we really need to do is throw some verses at them and ask them to make a decision. You cannot and should not make a decision to surrender control of your life to anyone on the basis of information you simply do not possess.
- **Someone must do the communicating.** *How are they to hear without someone preaching?* I want you to do something for me right now. I want you to say to yourself, "The preaching that Paul is talking about here is not only from a pulpit, and it was never meant to be understood only as the work of pastors." Think of the preaching Paul has in mind as simply communicating the message of the gospel. There can be no hearers without communicators, and each of us is

entrusted with communicating the gospel message to those around us who will listen.

- **Communicators must be sent.** The Greek word that's translated "sent" is the word "apostello." It's the word from which we get the word "apostle." By simple definition, an apostle is someone who has been sent with a message for someone else. In the early church and in Jesus' administration of his kingdom, there was a small group of men that he called apostles. None of us today are sent in the same way that they were, or with the same level of authority in the church and in the spiritual realm. But we can still carry out an apostolic ministry in the sense that the Great Commission is for every Christ-follower in every age and in every community. You and I are equipped with the life-transforming power of God in the form of the simple message of the gospel, and we are expected to share it with the people in our lives.

And when some with whom you have shared the message of the gospel believe, call upon the name of the Lord and are saved, they will thank you and bless you. That's what is being expressed in the latter part of verse 15 where Paul adds, *"As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"* I like this verse, because I've never felt that my feet were particularly attractive! Paul is quoting Isaiah 52:7.

Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am." How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

Isaiah 52:7

Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 52 was a message of hope, happiness and salvation to Israelites in captivity in Babylon. The Lord was going to exercise his intervention for their detention, break the power of their oppressor and bring them home.

If we were to reverse the order of Paul's six verbs in this section, we might see his argument more clearly:

1. Christ sends communicators
2. Communicators share the gospel
3. People hear
4. Hearers believe
5. Believers call upon the name of the Lord
6. Those who call are saved

Let me quickly put this another way, and present each of these stages in the negative. Unless believers like you and me accept the commission to share the gospel, there will

be no gospel communicators; unless the gospel is communicated, sinners will not hear Christ's message and voice; unless they hear him, they will not believe the truths of his death and resurrection; unless they believe these truths, they will not call on his name; and unless they call on his name, they will not be saved.

Paul Addresses The Jewish Response to the Gospel

Paul of all people understood this urgency most clearly and felt it most personally with regard to his people, the Jews. And in verse 16, he gives a sobering status report: They have not all obeyed the gospel.

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

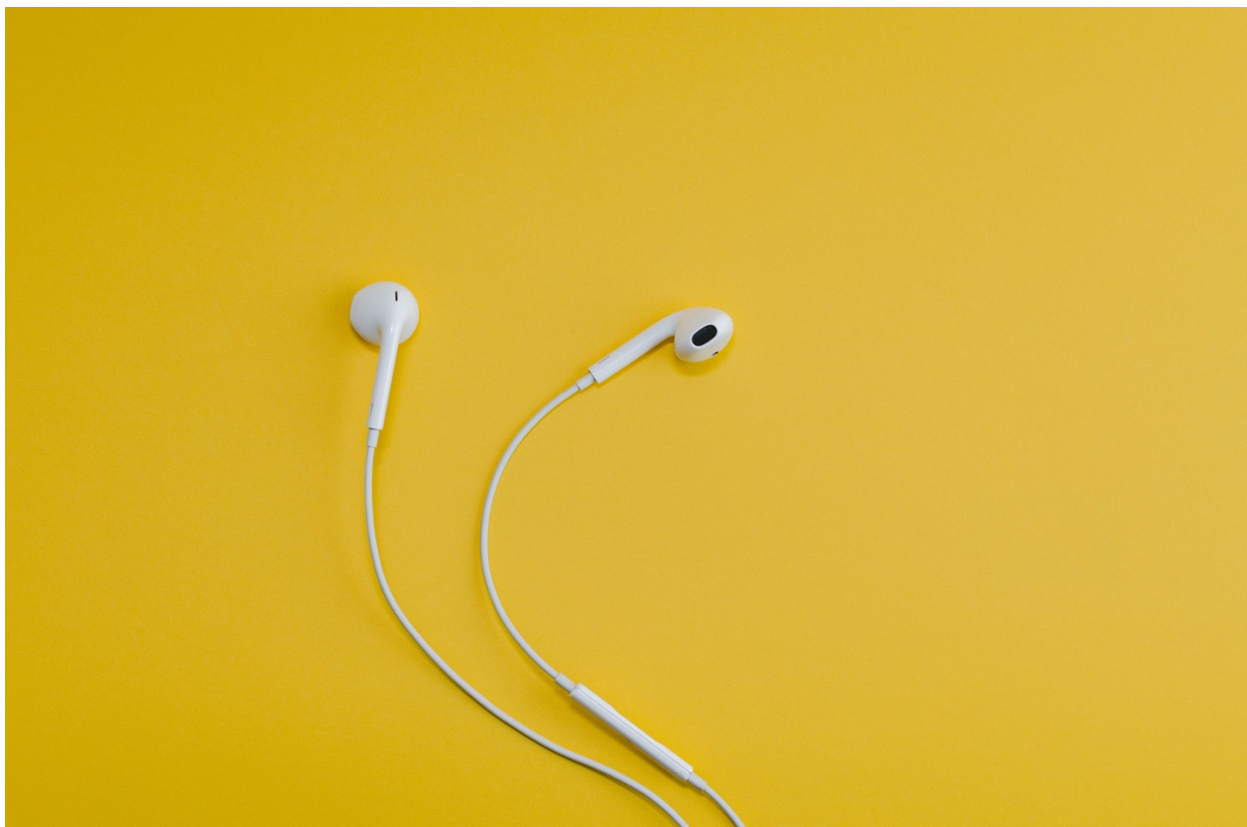
Romans 10:16-17

Notice Paul's choice of words. To choose disbelief in response to the gospel is to disobey God.

This whole section in Romans 10 is about the Jewish response—or *non-response*—to the gospel. Their unbelief, Paul shows us in verse 16, was foretold by Isaiah in his rhetorical question, "Lord, who has believed our message?" That's a direct quote from the first verse of Isaiah 53, that great chapter in which Isaiah describes Messiah as the suffering Servant who would come, be despised, rejected, pierced for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities, by whose wounds we are healed.

Paul also describes Israel's wholesale rejection of Jesus as their Messiah—such amazing clarity 700 years before the events it describes.

Yet they should have believed. **Faith comes through hearing the word of Christ.** Verse 17 echoes verse 14. But maybe there is still room for excuses. Paul presents two pertinent possibilities.



First he asks: Has Israel heard?

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”

Romans 10:18

Quick answer: Indeed, they have. To illustrate his point, Paul offers an Old Testament text that at first doesn’t seem to fit: Psalm 19:4. Here it is in context:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Psalm 19:1-4

Paul takes this passage in which the psalmist is referring to the universal witness of creation to the glory of God, and applies it to the advance of the gospel. He seems to be saying that the proclamation of the gospel has become as widespread as the light emitted by the sun, moon and stars. The gospel has been preached far and wide, and the Jews have heard it. To the church in Colossae, Paul described the message as

“The gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven”
(Colossians 1:23).

But perhaps there is another possible excuse for the Jews. Having heard, did Israel understand?

Paul replies, “Of course they did.” And to make his point he quotes first from Deuteronomy 32:21, and then from Isaiah 65:1.

First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”

Romans 10:19-20; Deuteronomy 32:21; Isaiah 65:1

Israel understood because both the Law and the Prophets anticipated and celebrated the truth that God wanted to use Israel to reach the Gentiles and bring them in to the family.

But Paul asks this final question: Did Israel seek God?

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

Romans 10:11-21

Why, then, didn’t Israel believe in Jesus as their Messiah?

- It can’t be because they didn’t hear. The proclamation of the Gospel had spread far and wide throughout the known world.
- It can’t be that they didn’t understand. They had the law and the prophets. They understood the nature of God, the need for righteousness, the promises of forgiveness by a substitutionary sacrifice that was rehearsed every day in the temple courts. They had the promises and prophecies regarding the coming of Messiah, especially that the Lord could become our righteousness for us. They should have understood.
- It can’t be that they weren’t searching for God, because as God himself said through Isaiah, he was ready to be sought even by those who didn’t ask for Him, and ready to be found even by those who didn’t seek Him. He had extended his hands to Israel all day every day.

The bottom line is that they didn’t respond to God and receive Jesus as their Messiah because they were rebellious and obstinate. God had not previously held out his hands to the Gentiles as he did to the Jews. Yet they responded. Israel is without excuse.

How Will You Respond to Jesus?

What's your excuse for not acknowledging Jesus for who He is—the Son of God—and receiving Him as the One who will forgive your sins and who alone is worthy of your obedience?

How will you answer the question: What have you done with Jesus? You've heard. You've understood. How will you respond to God's Son and the message of the gospel? Will you choose to believe in Jesus and call upon the Lord?

You who are believers: who in your life has never heard nor understood the message gospel? Are you willing for the sake of their eternal salvation to insure they have the opportunity to make a reasoned decision about Jesus? Consider yourselves commissioned and sent.



This post is based on the transcript of Pastor Jim Hays' sermon on September 22, 2019. Due to the nature of oral sermons, it may include thoughts and ideas from outside sources beyond those explicitly cited. If you have any questions or would like to know more about what he's shared, please [contact us](#) or [visit us](#) this coming Sunday!