

~Script: Frank R. Johnson~

Christians and Israel: *“What Will It Take to Get Through? Part 2”*  
Or, *“Getting the Message Out”*  
Romans 10:14-21

~Take a first look~

I. Last week, I told you about my junior high English teacher, Mr. Nichols. **I owe a lot of my success as a student to Bill Nichols.** Mr. Nichols was teaching Junior High English grammar in the Davenport, Washington, school system when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He was a squarish and stout man with a gruff low voice. He drilled us like an Army sergeant until we understood English grammar, parts of speech, kinds of clauses, the whole catalog. What made him so zealous? He had flunked English in high school, but somehow he wound up attending college anyway. I think he went to college to play sports. While there, he learned the English that he had missed while in elementary and secondary schools up to that point. He was a *convert* to English grammar. He didn't want any of us to struggle like he had, so he drilled us on grammar until the poorest English student in class could parse any word and diagram sentences. What a gift to all of us!

III. There is nothing like a true convert to express a zealous faith. The Apostle Paul had grown up with a serious and earnest Hebrew education. He was as committed to Judaism as anyone has ever been. When this band of followers of the rebel rabbi, Jesus, began to spread their message around, he would have none of it. His story is told in Acts, chapter 6 and 9, but then shared in bits and pieces throughout his letters to churches and individuals—the writings that make up a big part of the New Testament of the Bible. Paul had violently opposed the faith based in Jesus Christ, until he saw firsthand for himself how true it was. Then, he was willing to suffer anything to get that message to the world. He was especially keen to get it to his own Jewish brothers and sisters. Let's review a bit and then see what it takes to get that message out to the world.

**REVIEW OF OUR CONTEXT:**

**I. Paul shows how we must admit THE FUTILITY OF SALVATION BY WORKS. 9:30-33**

1. *The crux issue in our relationship with God is not our performance.* This is the historic error of Israel, spiritually speaking. Paul contrasts sharply the pursuit of a *law* that will bring righteousness (salvation by works, by human obedience alone), on the one hand, and the pursuit of righteousness by *faith*, on the other hand.

2. *Israel (as a whole) was relying on performance, the keeping of the law that would make them righteous.* Paul says, “They stumbled over the Stumbling Stone, Christ Himself.”

A—I hope by now all of us will give up the notion that we are able to perform to a high enough level to earn acceptance with God.

**II. Then, Paul argues that we must accept THE WAY OF SALVATION REVEALED BY GOD. 10:2-13**

1. *The people of Israel were sincere in their zeal for God.* v. 2a

2. *But their zeal was not based on what God had revealed.* v. 2b

3. *They were trying to perform well enough themselves to earn a standing with God.* v. 3

4. *Christ came to bring such attempts at self-made righteousness to an end.* v. 4. This is a curious statement that has been interpreted in a variety of ways. The Greek word is τέλος (*telos*). A. T. Robertson: “Paul’s main idea is that Christ ended the law as a method of salvation for “every one that believeth” whether Jew or Gentile. Christ wrote finis on law as a means of grace.”<sup>1</sup>

A—The Old Testament Law was not an end in itself; it was meant to guide us to Christ.

**I— Galatians 3:23-25 (NIV):** “<sup>23</sup> Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”

**The law can drive the bus that gets us to the school, but it can’t give us the education.**

### **Romans 10:5-8**

5. *Paul uses various Old Testament quotations to illustrate the difference between a works-based righteousness and a faith-based righteousness.* vv. 5-8. He shows clearly that self-effort could neither bring Christ down from heaven nor could it raise Him from the dead. Rather, Christ did these things on His own initiative by the power of God.

### **Romans 10:9-13**

6. *Then, he calls everyone to faith in Christ alone.* vv. 9-13.

(1) *Christ has come.*

(2) *We must believe in His death and resurrection.*

(3) *We must confess our faith in Him as Lord (This is simply recognizing the objective truth about His person and work and our desire that this be true of our relationship to Him).*

(4) *We receive assurance of our acceptance with Him—Isaiah 28:16 (“Everyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame”) and Joel 2:32 (“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”). But how will people come to call on Him? That question is answered in the next paragraph.*

~Take a closer look at Romans 10:14-21~

### **III. JESUS’ FOLLOWERS MUST ANNOUNCE THE WAY OF SALVATION TO THE WORLD.** vv. 1, 14-21

<sup>1</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, at Romans 10:4, as published in BibleWorks, version 7.

1. *The initiative of God is given expression through the cooperation of human agents.* vv. 14-15. Here again is the sequence that occurs before anyone comes to faith in Christ. If we reason backward from Paul's sequence here, we can start at the beginning. First, ...

a. God sends witnesses, ambassadors, emissaries. (1) First, God sent His own Son: "And we have seen and are bearing witness that the Father sent the Son as Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14, FJV). This is the beginning of the Good News of God. John 3:16 sums it up, too: "For in this manner God loved the world, so that He gave the only begotten Son, in order that everyone who keeps on believing in Him should not perish but should have eternal life" (FJV). Note the subject and verbs in these sentences, since I have already made a point about grammar today: "The *Father* ... *sent* the Son." And, "*God loved* the world, so that He *gave* the only begotten Son ...." (2) But then, right after His resurrection, when gathered with His closest followers, Jesus said: "Just as the Father sent Me, I also am sending you"<sup>2</sup> (John 20:21, FJV). God sent His Son, and His Son sent His followers into the world with the message of grace and truth (see John 1:14).

b. Those witnesses proclaim the message He has sent them to proclaim. This is Part II of the Story of Jesus Christ. Luke tells the first part of Jesus' story in his gospel account (the Gospel of Luke), and then he tells the second part of Jesus' story as Jesus' followers take their commission from Jesus and begin to "go into all the world and make disciples of all nations" (see Matthew 28:19).

c. Others hear and the Holy Spirit helps them to understand. The proclamation of the good news of Jesus was not done in a vacuum, but rather to all the people they encountered everywhere. "How will they hear without someone preaching to them?" indeed.

d. Some believe. This plays out in the story of the book of Acts, and it plays out still today. People in the same crowd, hearing the same message, respond differently. Some believe; some do not.

e. Those who believe call on the name of the Lord for salvation. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Paul applies this quotation from Joel 2:32 to those who hear the gospel and believe. When they do believe, they call upon the name of Jesus for forgiveness of sins, a restored relationship to God, and eternal life.

A—How about us? Have we heard the message of Jesus Christ truly and fully? Do we believe it? Have we called upon Jesus' name for forgiveness of sins, a restored relationship with God, and eternal life?

**I—Some high-profile Olympic Athletes have heard this message and put their faith in Jesus Christ.** Here is a clip from **Aaron Brooks**, a top-tier wrestler: "After winning his fourth consecutive individual NCAA national championship with Penn State, Brooks advanced to the 86kg freestyle final at the U.S. team trials, where he beat reigning Olympic and world champion David Taylor. As he often does, Brooks praised God after his match. "Praise the Lord. Like I say many times, it's a journey with Him," Brooks told NBC. "Just put my faith in Him. Praise the Lord." When asked later in a press conference about his advice to kids who admire his wrestling ability, he said, "I'd say seek the Lord. He will guide your steps. Praise the Lord. Have faith in Him. That's the best advice I can give them because it changed my life."

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<sup>2</sup> Both pronouns, "you," in this verse are plural.

Or take **Stephen Curry**, a high-profile basketball player: “Paris will mark Curry’s Olympic debut. The U.S. men have won four consecutive Olympic gold medals and are favored for a fifth straight. The 36-year-old Curry has long been outspoken about his faith. ‘My faith is about the personal relationship, more so than following a certain religious tradition or practice. Challenges you to make sure that you are feeding your spirit with the right things versus what the world is throwing at us,’ he said in a 2019 episode of his “Stephen vs. The Game” Facebook series.” He recently posted Romans 10:9 on his social media account (X): “Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Or, **Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone**: She is “the world-record holder in the women’s 400m hurdles (50.65 seconds), McLaughlin-Levrone is favored to win her second straight Olympic gold medal in the event. She’ll face stiff competition from Femke Bol of the Netherlands, who recently posted a 50.95 to join McLaughlin-Levrone as the only women to ever run under 51 seconds in the event. But for the 24-year-old American, she’s leaving the results up to her Lord and Savior. ‘It’s the truth in a sport where you’re literally chasing gold all the time — I would take my love for Christ and that relationship over a gold medal any day,’ she told *Sports Spectrum* in January.” There are many more such testimonies from Olympic athletes who have found the truth of Jesus Christ compelling and have grounded their lives in that truth.<sup>3</sup>

2. *The reality of Israel’s experience is this: they heard, they understood, and they rejected the message.* vv. 16-21. That was the reality of many who lived in the time of Jesus and afterward. These people followed the conclusions drawn by the Jewish leadership in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Ruling Council of Elders. They had delivered Jesus up to Roman authorities to be crucified out of jealousy (see Mark 15:10). Their statements about Jesus and then His subsequent crucifixion by the Roman governor Pilate ensured that other Jewish people would be predisposed to unbelief. And this was true—but not for all. All of the first Christians were Jewish, until God sent out His witnesses beyond the realm of Jewish life.

A—Our part in the salvation of others is to go and tell; God’s part is to bring them to faith.

**I—Paul knew by experience what this meant. He had been on a defiant course to persecute Christians.** He had been there when Stephen was martyred for His uncompromising testimony to what Paul was writing here: “Christ is the end of the law for everyone who believes.” But God reached down and saved him despite himself. Paul’s religious zeal had done nothing except drive him farther from God. Jesus finally found him. This made him all the more zealous to report the truth to his own people and to anyone who would listen.

3. *Paul was committed to pray for His people, even though they were not responsive at present.* v. 1. His heart went out to them to the degree that his heart broke over their hardness of heart. He would not stop hurting nor praying for their salvation.

A—Are we committed to pray consistently and earnestly for those in our lives that are not made whole by God’s grace in Christ?

**I—In *Point Man*, Steve Farrar tells the story of George McCluskey.** When McCluskey married and started a family, he decided to invest one hour a day in prayer, because he wanted his kids to follow Christ. After a time, he expanded his prayers to include his grandchildren and

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<sup>3</sup> These stories are from *Sports Spectrum*: <https://sportsspectrum.com/sport/olympics/2024/07/25/20-christ-following-us-olympians-2024-paris-games/>.

great-grandchildren. Every day between 11 a.m. and noon, he prayed for the next three generations.

As the years went by, his two daughters committed their lives to Christ and married men who went into full-time ministry. The two couples produced four girls and one boy. Each of the girls married a minister, and the boy became a pastor. The first two children born to this generation were both boys. Upon graduation from high school, the two cousins chose the same college and became roommates.

During their sophomore year, one boy decided to go into the ministry. The other did not. He undoubtedly felt some pressure to continue the family legacy, but he chose instead to pursue his interest in psychology. He earned his doctorate and eventually wrote books for parents that became bestsellers. He started a radio program heard on more than a thousand stations each day. The man's name was James Dobson. Through his prayers, George McCluskey affected far more than one family.<sup>4</sup>

Prayer is an admission that everything that really matters in our lives and in the lives of others is done by God. Prayer ties us inseparably to God's work in the lives of others. As Blaise Pascal wrote, "Prayer gives us the dignity of causality." Prayer does not "make things happen," but it links us to God Who alone can make things happen that matter for eternity.

~Take it home (applications)~

- I. We must give up all illusions of self-made salvation.
- II. We must put our faith in Christ without reservation.
- III. Then, we have the privilege to share the faith with a seeker.

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<sup>4</sup> Loyal J. Martin, Newton, Kansas. *Leadership*, Vol. 16, no. 4.