

Notes on Romans 9.30–10.21

This is a synopsis with some modifications and additions of the relevant section of NT Wright, *The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*: New Interpreter's Bible, Volume X (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2002).

C. God's covenant faithfulness unveiled in Israel's fall and in the Messiah 9.30–10.21

In 9.6-29, the first part of his retelling of Israel's story in this section, Paul brought us from from the Patriarchs, through the Exodus, and down to the Exile. Now in the second part, 9.30–10.21, he brings us from the Exile and its promise of a remnant down to the Messiah and the renewal of the covenant which has at last taken place in him. Through this covenant renewal, the good news of Jesus is now going out to all the world, although Israel remains recalcitrant. This is a crucial part of the story Paul is telling; it's not an aside or an excursus, but central to his argument in Rm 9–11 as a whole.

The structure of the section is this:

- 9.30-33 Israel has stumbled over the stumbling stone
- 10.1-13 God's righteousness is revealed
 - 10.1-3 A prayer that more Jews be saved
 - 10.4-10 The messianic covenant renewal
 - 10.11-13 Salvation is for all who believe
- 10.14-21 The Gentiles are included
 - 10.14-18 The mission to the Gentiles
 - 10.19-21 Israel remains hardened

The key point is that because of Israel's recalcitrance, the good news of Jesus is going out into all the world.

1. Israel has stumbled over the stumbling stone 9.30-33

The first passage of the section stands back from the story Paul has been telling, and reflects on how the Gentiles have overtaken righteousness without having pursued it, and Israel has failed to reach it, despite pursuing

it. God has used the process described in 9.14-24 as a way of calling "vessels of glory," who now are not only Jews but Gentiles as well. For the moment, he doesn't mention remnant-Israel (9.25-29), but only Israel that has failed. He frames his summary of who obtained 'righteousness' in terms of Torah and faith.

'Righteousness' (*dikaïosynē*) primarily denotes a status that human beings may or may not possess— one that Gentiles have come to share but which ethnic Israel as a whole, at least for now, has forfeited, despite (or rather, because of) their attempt to establish it. The status of 'righteousness' is available through the Messiah, and its sign is faith.

Paul uses the word also to denote an attribute of God (10.3). Depending on context, it can mean his correctness as judge in giving a righteous verdict, and in other cases it can mean his covenant faithfulness— these two meanings are not far from each other in any case. Has God been faithful to his promises? and if so, has he been guilty of 'unrighteousness' (*adikia*), given the problem outlined in the first section? These were the questions in 3.1-8, where the main subject was God's own 'righteousness' and the secondary one was Israel's status.

The first thing Paul notes in this new phase (9.30-10.21) of his argument is that the Gentiles have found righteousness. Obviously, this is the righteousness that the Torah was designed to show. Paul is saying essentially the same thing here in 9.30 as he says in 2.14-15:

- 9.30 The Gentiles, who weren't pursuing righteousness, have overtaken righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.
- 2.14-15 When the Gentiles, who don't have the Torah by nature do the things of the Torah, these,

who don't have the Torah, are a Torah to themselves, who show the Torah's work written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness....

It's with the 'heart', of course, that one has 'faith', as Paul will say in 10.9-10.

Israel, on the other hand, 'pursued the Torah of righteousness, but didn't reach the Torah' (9.31). Or to put it in terms of Rm 7, Israel has not found God's Torah, but Sin's Torah (7.21-25); it has not reached 'the Torah's work written in their hearts' (2.15, cf Dt 30.6,14)— which would distinguish them inalienably as God's people. Torah possession, Torah 'work', was never the goal of God's promises; its work rather was the 'recognition of Sin' (3.20). But the God who gave the Torah to Israel is the very same who promised Abraham that he would bless 'all nations' through his seed, and so fix the problem of Adam. But even as it brought about a recognition of Sin (3.20), the Torah only separated Israel from the rest of the world. So God had to have in mind a covenant membership that was based on something other than the zealous pursuit of Torah that the Jews were pursuing (Ga 1.14; Ph 3.4-6), for 'Israel, pursuing the Torah of righteousness, did not reach the Torah' (9.31).

Covenant membership would indeed have been defined by Torah if that had been possible— but Torah was addressed to people who were rebellious and doomed to die (7.10; cf. Ga 3.21), and it exposed them for what they were. It did not change their hearts. Still, the Torah itself is God's Torah, and right here in 9.31 Paul can even characterize the 'righteousness' that the Gentiles have overtaken as a matter of 'reaching Torah'— but the question is, what does 'reaching Torah' entail?

The full answer to this will be given in 10.6-9, using the 'new covenant' passage of Dt 30 ('and YHWH your God will circumcise your heart... the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it', Dt 30.6,14). But for now, to suppose that 'God's Torah' could be 'reached'— and covenant membership secured— simply by '[Torah-]works' (9.32)— whether that meant the detailed list of 613 commandments, or, more generally, the works that distinguished Jews from their pagan neighbors— is to miss the point of the Torah altogether.

Israel pursued but didn't reach God's Torah because it stumbled; and the stone that tripped them (9.32) was put there not by a demon, but by the covenant God himself (9.33). With this, we are back to the paradox of Rm 7. The Torah was God's good and holy Torah, but when it was given, Sin sprang to life and 'I' died (7.9). When Israel continued to live under the Torah, Sin lay close at hand

(7.21), infesting the good Torah and turning it into 'Sin's Torah' (7.23,25).

In 9.32-33, Paul combines Isa 8.14 and 28.16 in a very interesting way:

Isa 8.14 'And if you will be trusting upon him, he will be for a sanctuary for you; and you will not come against him as against a stumbling-stone (*lithou proskommati*), nor as against a rock for falling (*petras ptōmati*): but the houses of Jacob are in a snare, and the dwellers in Jerusalem in a pit'.

Isa 28.16 LXX 'Therefore thus says the Lord Yhwh, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone (*lithon*), a costly stone, a choice cornerstone and precious, for her foundation: Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame' (*ka-taischynthēi*).

In 9.32, Paul says that Israel stumbled on the 'stone of stumbling' (*tōi lithōi tou proskommatos*), quoting Isa 8.14. Then taking this 'stone of stumbling' into 9.33, he quotes from Isa 28.16, 'Behold, I lay¹ in Zion'— but what God lays is not the expected 'foundation stone' of Isa 28.16, but the 'stumbling-stone' of Isa 8.14. So God put the stumbling block there.

Then Paul goes back to the end of Isa 28.16: 'Whoever bases his trust on him will not be put to shame' (9.33b).

The passage about the 'stone' (Isa 28.16) quoted in 9.33 is part of the paragraph in Isaiah that also includes 'works finished and cut short by the Lord of hosts' (Isa 28.22, quoted in 9.28).

So who or what is this 'stone' that Israel has tripped over? Interestingly, in Isa 8.14, it is the Lord himself, and 'if you are trusting in him, he will be a sanctuary for you; and you will *not* come against him as against a stumbling-stone'. Israel has stumbled because they were not trusting in him. But in 10.11, Paul repeats 'everyone who believes in him shall not be ashamed' (the line he quotes from Isa 28.16 here in 9.33b), and there in 10.11, the word 'him' very clearly refers to Jesus the Messiah,² summing up the preceding verses (10.6-10), where the 'faith' out of which 'righteousness' comes (6.10)— which the Gentiles have overtaken (9.30)— is faith focused on the Messiah. For in fact 'the Messiah is the goal of the Torah unto righteousness for everyone who believes'

¹ Paul uses *tithēmi* rather than the LXX's *emballō*.

² Jesus refers to himself as the 'head of the corner' (*kephalē gōnias*), in Mk 12.10 & *par*; cf also 1P 2.8, and note *akrogōniaion*, Isa 28.16. In Lk 20.18 one might fall and break on, or be crushed by, the rejected cornerstone.

(10.4). So the stumbling-stone, which God laid (9.33b, quoting Isa 28.16) is the Messiah himself, who is not only 'of [Israel] according to the flesh' but 'God forever blessed' (9.5)!

Well, we already knew that the Jews have stumbled over the Messiah. But it looks like Paul is saying that God has put the Messiah there *so that* they would stumble over him! As Paul will argue in 11.11-16, it was God's intention all along for Israel to be the *Messiah's* people according to the flesh; that is, that they would be 'cast away' (11.15) like the Messiah himself, so that the world might be redeemed. We'll see how that works when we get there.

But how has Israel 'stumbled' over him? Obviously, the Judaeans' rejection, and Jesus' consequent crucifixion at the hands of the pagan authorities (Ac 13.27-9; 1Th 2.15) constituted a 'scandal'³ to them (1Co 1.23; Ga 5.11). This is bound up in Paul's mind with Israel's attempt to 'attain Torah' by '[Torah-]works'— to define 'righteousness' by ritual, to confine grace to race, to create a covenant status for Jews and Jews only, to advance 'God's designs' by political maneuvering and holy war— all of which Paul sees as fundamentally in conflict with the crucified Messiah, and hence with God's whole covenant plan, as it has reached its goal in him.

But (as mentioned), Israel's fall is not outside God's purposes. Israel stumbled over the stumbling-stone which God 'laid in Zion'. Rm 9.30-33 and, more widely, 9.30-10.21 is, after all, part of an argument that 'God's word has not failed' (9.6). Sinful Israel would be 'cast away', but even this was for the 'world's reconciliation' (11.14), and both Torah and Messiah are part of the process. The Messiah remains the key to what God has done with Israel; but for now, Israel remains the Messiah's people mainly according to the flesh.

2. God's righteousness 10.1-13

a. A prayer that more Jews be saved 10.1-3

Although for purposes of study we will divide this paragraph (10.1-13) into three subsections, we have to appreciate it whole if we want to understand its parts. In particular, even translators tend to take 10.3-4 out of context, in service of the 'evangelical' teaching on 'faith vs works righteousness', so it's important to pay attention to the links that connect these verses.⁴ When Paul

says 'because' (*gar*), he means that what he's about to say is the *explanation* of something he's just said, and neither statement can be understood without the other. Much of his style relies on long explanatory chains linked with this conjunction 'for' or 'because' (*gar*), but the whole of 10.1-13 forms as tight a chain as any you can find in Paul, anywhere.

In 10.1, he makes an initial statement; then he explains it (*gar*) in 10.2, and explains that (*gar*) in 10.3; and explains that (*gar*) in 10.4, and explains that (*gar*) in 10.5, which introduces the heart of the passage (10.5-9); and then explains that (*gar*) in 10.10, and so on in 10.11,12a,12b, and 13, with *gar* ('for, because') at every step. *Please make sure your bible reflects this structure.* For convenience, I've put a literal translation in the footnotes.⁵

The main theme of 10.1-13 is the covenant renewal, and covenant redefinition, that has taken place in the Messiah. God has done what he promised. There are any number of passages in the OT which say what he promised,⁶ but Paul quotes Dt 30.12-14 in 10.6-9: after the Exile, God would restore Israel, enabling it to keep the Torah in a new way. Paul's kinfolk according to the flesh

the explanation of 10.2; and simply deletes *gar* from 10.4, making it into another independent thought, rather than the explanation of 10.3: ²For I can testify about them [Paul says 'to them', *autois*] that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.' Both NIV and NRSV further omit the *gar* that connects 10.5 with 10.4 and hence all the way back to 10.1, starting a new paragraph with 10.5. It all flows nicely, but *by breaking his logical chains, they turn Paul's actual argument into an argument supporting 'evangelical' doctrine.*

⁵ *Literal translation of 10.1-13:* ^{10.1}Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is unto salvation, ²because (*gar*) I bear them record that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; ³because (*gar*) being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness; ⁴because (*gar*) the Messiah is the goal of the Torah unto righteousness for everyone who believes. ⁵Because (*gar*) Moses writes the righteousness which is out of the Torah, that: "The man who does those things shall live by them." ⁶But the righteousness [that's] out of faith speaks thus: "Do not say in your (sg) heart", "Who shall ascend into heaven?"— (that is, to bring the Messiah down); ⁷or, "Who shall descend into the deep?"— (that is, to bring up the Messiah again from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? "The word is close to you (sg), even in your mouth, and in your heart"— that is, the word of faith, which we proclaim; ⁹Because (*hoti*) if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. ¹⁰Because (*gar*) with the heart man believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. ¹¹Because (*gar*) the scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him shall not be ashamed". ¹²Because (*gar*) there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: because (*gar*) the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon him. ¹³ Because (*gar*) everyone "who shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved".

⁶ Classically, Jr 31.33-34.

³ *Skandalon*, 'scandal', is often translated 'stumbling block' (e.g., KJV, RSV, NRSV, NEB, NJV 1Co 1.23); but the metaphor of stumbling is actually not part of its meaning, which has to do with *enticing* to sin. See BDAG. Where do translators even get their ideas??

⁴ Tellingly, NIV turns Paul's explanatory 'for' or 'because' (*gar*) at the start of 10.3 into 'Since' and makes it a separate thought, rather than

did not understand how God had been true to the covenant all along, or how he was now doing exactly what he had promised, renewing the covenant and bringing Gentiles into membership through faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead, in equal community with Jews who shared the same faith. Nevertheless, he has done it. The promised covenant renewal has taken place in and through Jesus the Messiah, the world's true Lord.

Note, though, that the paragraph begins with Paul's prayer that the *Jews* would be saved (10.1). Rm 10.1-13 is still part of the argument which began with his grief at Israel's obduracy (9.1-5). In other words, when he expounds Dt 30.12-14 in 10.6-9, he's insisting that faith in the Messiah— faith that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead— is the way to salvation and covenant renewal for *Jew* as well as Greek. They aren't going to 'reach Torah' (9.31) any other way.

Moreover, when he speaks of how people come to salvation, and grounds this in a biblical passage that speaks of how God restores his people's fortunes after the punishment of exile, he has the salvation of his fellow *Jews* in mind, primarily. 'If you confess... and believe... you will be saved' (10.9); belief and confession lead to salvation (10.10); all who call upon the Lord's name will be saved (10.13). To be sure, this is combined with his point in 9.24,30 that Gentiles are becoming equal members in God's people. But his urgent prayer is that it should happen for *Jews* as well.

The Jews 'have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge' (10.2). In 10.3, Paul explains that this is because (*gar*) they're ignorant of 'God's righteousness', and have been 'seeking to establish their own righteousness' instead. Since he says 'righteousness' three times⁷ in this verse, and especially since the verse is commonly mistranslated due to a commitment to Lutheran/Calvinist views about how we 'get saved', it's good to examine this verse in the light of we said earlier about righteousness. The verse says

10.3 'Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness.'

The first and third occurrences refer to God's 'righteousness'— the quality of covenant faithfulness and of just judgment in accordance with the covenant, that has been the main theme of Romans all along and of 9.6-29 in particular. The second occurrence refers to the covenant status that Israel-according-to-the-flesh had thought to set up for itself but failed to reach.

⁷ In some mss, the middle occurrence is missing: 'ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own [righteousness], they did not submit to God's righteousness'.

You may have to correct your bible at this point. The 1984 NIV⁸ and the NRSV, for example, say that the Jews did not know 'the righteousness that comes from God'. But Paul did not say anything about a 'righteousness' that 'comes from God'. He said the Jews didn't know 'God's [own] righteousness (*theou dikaiosynē*)'.

He is also not speaking of moral status, 'imputed' (as in Protestant doctrine) or otherwise. As we said above, 'righteousness' (*dikaïosynē*) here refers in part to a *covenant status* that Gentiles have come to share but that ethnic Israel has forfeited, because of the way it was attempting to establish it. The status in question is available through the Messiah, and its basis and sign is faith.

An analogy may clarify 10.3, then: The defendants in a lawsuit might be ignorant of the judge's justice, and seek foolishly to establish their own, rather than submitting to the judge's. Justice isn't a moral quality that belongs to the judge, which he might then 'impute' to the accused; it's a quality he exercises in judging the case. The defendants must submit to his just judgment, his 'righteousness', rather than trying to establish their own 'righteousness' or justice or law. With respect to God, the meaning of 'righteousness' (or 'justice', another translation) is very close to 'law' itself. Paul is saying, in effect, 'not recognizing God's justice, they tried to establish their own, and did not submit to his'. He's not talking about the Torah, but about its underlying purpose— that covenant relationship that can be characterized on both sides, but in complementary ways, as faithfulness, loyalty, justice, or membership, depending on the context.

So with regard to both God and Israel, 'righteousness' refers to covenant status, but God is the covenant-giver and judge. And since 3.1-8, where the main subject was God's own 'righteousness', Paul has been asking whether God has been guilty of 'unrighteousness' (*adikia*) in condemning Israel, to whom he had given the promises, and in allowing the Gentiles to be covenant members.

As in 1.17 and 3.21-6, Paul's point is that God is certainly faithful to the promises he made to Abraham. Paul isn't working with an abstract conception of 'law' and asking whether God conforms to it. There is no law to which God would be subject.⁹ So 'justice' means 'covenant loy-

⁸ NIV has been reissued, and this verse has been corrected in the new edition.

⁹ This is the basic flaw of Western scholastic (and hence Lutheran-Calvinist) atonement theory: it presupposes that God is subject to the law of his own nature, his 'absolute justice', and *must* therefore punish sin. So, to satisfy the absolute demand of his own justice, he sends his Son and punishes him so he won't have to punish us, and imputes the Son's 'righteousness' to us (this is what 'a righteousness that comes from God' means) by a kind of judicial lie. God is thus personally subject to the higher law of his own nature. The Orthodox fathers say that his personal freedom transcends even his own nature and

alty': has God honored his word. And Paul has said, 'It's not like God's word has failed' (9.6). The problem is that Israel according to the flesh never understood what God, in his strange Messiah-shaped purpose, was up to, and they did not submit to it. Exactly like the wicked tenants in Jesus' parable (Mk 12.1-12), their behavior culminated in the rejection— but also, because *God* is faithful to his Servant, the vindication— of the 'stone' the builders refused, as they sought to claim the inheritance for their own.

Important takeaway point: Paul is not talking about a moral status, such as the Jews or anyone else might have achieved by climbing up a ladder called 'works'. He's talking about a status that would be theirs on the basis of ethnicity, of claiming to be 'God's Chosen People' because they had the Torah. They were chosen, and they had the Torah; but these were just not the goal of the story.

b. Messianic covenant renewal 10.4-10

Rm 10.4 usually presents yet another translation problem: Both scholarly and popular opinion for centuries has accepted the Lutheran understanding that 'the law' simply leads people into 'works-righteousness' or 'self-righteousness', into a futile attempt to 'achieve' salvation. In accordance with that, 10.4 was then taken to mean something like 'Christ ends the law and brings righteousness for everyone who has faith' (NEB), or 'But now the Law has come to an end with Christ, and everyone who has faith may be justified' (JB).¹⁰ One problem, though, is that *telos* normally means a '*goal*' or a '*consummation*' rather than a 'termination' in Paul.¹¹ So Paul is actually saying that 'the *goal* of the Torah is the Messiah', so that everyone who has faith in him might be accounted righteousness (10.4). Saying that 'Christ ends the law and brings righteousness for everyone who has faith' actually puts the Torah in *opposition* to the Messiah, righteousness, and faith. But Torah, Israel's covenant charter, *leads* from Abraham to the Messiah as its *goal*. Torah *witnesses* to the righteousness that's in the Messiah (3.21). That's how the story works for Paul.

Paul is not declaring the Torah's abrogation in favor of a different 'system'— the end of a religion of 'works' and the beginning of a religion of 'faith'. He is announcing that the Messiah is himself the climax of the long story of God and Israel, which was *already* a story of faith when God counted Abraham's faith as 'righteousness'

that, indeed, his personhood— his freedom and creativity— is the source of his nature, and not the other way around.

¹⁰ JB is 'Jerusalem Bible', not 'John Burnett'.

¹¹ See 6.21-22; 2Co 11.15, h 3.19; also 1Co 15.24; for the verb form (τελέω), 2Co 12.9, and esp Rm 2.27, a critical early point in the argument that anticipates both 8.1-11 and the present passage.

(Gn 15.6; Rm 4.3). The Torah played a vital though puzzling part in this story, but God's purposes in the Torah, both negative and positive, reach their goal in the Messiah, and the result is the accessibility and availability of 'righteousness' for *all* who *believe* in the sense that Abraham did. Both 'all' and 'believe' are important: (a) 'righteousness' (the status of covenant membership) is not limited to Jews, but open to 'all', and (b) the sign of this status is not 'works of Torah', but faith.

In 10.5-11, it looks like Paul has Moses telling people to keep the Torah in order to find life (10.5, quoting Lv 18.5), and then something called 'the righteousness of faith', defined as a quote from Dt 9.4, 30.12-14, tells them just to believe (10.6). So it seems like Paul is lining up Deuteronomy against Leviticus (and everybody hates Leviticus anyway!). And that is just how Protestant thinking has tended to treat these verses. One problem, though, is that both Leviticus and Deuteronomy come from the same Moses.

Dt 30 actually comes immediately after the chapters in which Moses has held out the covenant blessings and curses. Israel, a 'stiff-necked people', will come under the curses, but after they have all gone into effect, and in particular after exile has done its worst, then God will bring about a great reversal. Dt 30 spells out a return from exile, and tells of the spiritual and moral renewal that will make that return possible and appropriate.

In the middle of this prediction is Dt 30.11-14, the passage Paul quotes in 10.6-8. The commandment is not too hard; it's not far off. You don't need to go up to heaven and bring it down, nor to go down into the abyss to bring it up.¹² 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth, and in your heart, so that you may do it' (Dt 30.14, quoted in 10.8). The chapter is all about how Israel has been sent into exile and is now going to turn to ΥHWH from the heart, and it goes on to explain what it really means to 'do' the law and to 'live'. This life-giving 'doing' will be a matter not of 'works' that have to be done, but of heart and mouth being renewed by God's living 'word'. It will not be a matter of someone else teaching it to them as from a great distance. In fact Dt 30.14 omits even 'hearing', because the commandment will already be inside them, in their mouth and heart. We cannot but think of Jr 31.33-34: In the restoration after the exile, the people will not need to be taught the commandments, because they will be written on their hearts. And this in turn reminds us of 2.25-29, a passage that Paul is about to echo in 10.9-10: 'he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the spir-

¹² Dt 30.13 actually says 'sea', rather than 'abyss', and the direction of travel (with corresponding verb 'cross') is 'over', not 'down'.

it, and not in the letter'. Paul has the context and overall meaning of Dt 30 firmly in mind. But the point is, he is *not* setting Lv 18.5 in 10.5 in opposition to Dt 30.12-14 in 10.6-8. He is *not* saying 'Moses encouraged that stupid and impossible legal system of works-righteousness that the silly Jews have to follow, but look over here— Moses encourages faith instead!' Lv 18.5 speaks of 'doing Torah' and 'living'— and Dt 30.12-14 points to what that really means: the word 'is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it'. For in the Messiah's death and resurrection, the ultimate exile and return have taken place, and the Spirit is poured out into our hearts (5.5).

We need to stress very hard that Paul is not talking about morality, but about covenant membership. Morality will flow from that, but that's not his topic here. As in 2.25-29 and elsewhere, Paul's point here is that those who believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (10.9, cf 4.24) are in fact 'doing the Torah' in the sense that Dt 30 (and, e.g., Jr 31.33-34) intended, and they are raised to 'life' with him, as 8.9-11 pointed out— the life that Torah wanted to give but could not (7.10). That life that can now be spoken of more specifically as 'salvation' (10.9,10,13). And salvation, of course, was what Paul prayed for, for his kinsfolk.

So then: *Why* is 'the Messiah the goal of the Torah unto righteousness for all who believe' (10.4)? *Because* (*gar*, 10.5), although Moses does indeed write concerning Torah-righteousness that the one who does the commandments shall live in them, what 'doing' and 'living' mean, when God restores Israel after exile, is defined by Dt 30 in terms of God's gift of his own word, the 'word' of the faith that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. *This* is how Paul's prayer in 10.1 is to be answered. Rm 10.5 is not a statement of a legalism that Paul then sweeps aside. The 'but' (*de*) that links 10.6 to 10.5 does not indicate contradiction, but modification: 'Yes, Moses did write Lv 18.5; *but* it is explained in Dt 30'.

But what is Paul making Dt 30 out to be saying? He introduces his reference to Dt 30.12-14 by alluding first to Dt 9.4: 'Do not say in your heart' (10.6b). He's not doing this just to sound 'biblical'. Moses continues in Dt 9, 'Do not say... that it's because of my righteousness that YHWH has brought me in to occupy this land.' This is exactly the fault that Paul has just highlighted in 10.3— 'seeking to establish a righteousness of their own'. (And Dt 9 goes on to emphasize that Israel provoked YHWH to anger at Sinai by making the golden calf, and that they survived only because of Moses' intercession.) Do not say that, for 'the righteousness [that comes] out of faith (*hē ek pisteōs dikaiosyne*) speaks thus' (10.6).

What it says is that the 'word/act' (*rhēma*, 10.8)¹³ that confirms true covenant membership, doesn't have to go far to find the Messiah who is its goal, but very near indeed, for it is the 'word/act' of faith.

'To bring the Messiah down' (10.6d) fits the Wisdom christology of Col 1.15-20, and is closely aligned with 8.3 ('God, sending his son... has condemned sin'); it belongs with the double emphasis on Jesus as God's son and David's son in 1.3-4; it goes also with the incarnational stress of 9.5 ('of whom as concerning the flesh the Messiah came, who is over all, God blessed for ever') that will be echoed in 10.11-13, and it prepares the way for the confession 'Jesus is Lord' in 10.9. Paul's reading of Dt 30.11-14 says: 'The covenant has been renewed, following the devastation of exile, through God's sending the Messiah and raising him from the dead. God has already brought his 'word' (Dt 10.14), his 'commandment' (=Torah) (Dt 10.11) near to you, placing it on your lips and in your heart as you confess Jesus as Lord, believing that he was raised from the dead (cf 10.9).

When Paul says that 'this is the word of faith that we proclaim' (10.8), he makes his apostolic vocation part of the argument. This will grow through 10.14-18, and play a crucial role in 11.13-14. His own announcing of Jesus as the risen Lord, summoning people to 'the obedience of faith' (1.5), is itself part of the answer to his prayer for the salvation of the Jews in 10.1. That is why, in 10.9, he explains that when faith happens, it leads to 'salvation', which is what he prayed for at the start of the chapter.

Paul explains (*hoti*, a stronger 'because') what he has just said with one of the clearest statements in all of his writings of what 'faith' means. It's not a vague religious awareness or a general sense of a benevolent deity, or a sense that things will all work out for the better. It's the confession, specifically, of Jesus as Lord and the belief that God raised him from the dead (10.9). This, of course, is what undergirds the earlier argument of the letter, and we already saw it 1.3-5 and 4.24-25.

Confession 'with the mouth' that 'Jesus is Lord' was a primitive baptismal formula (see Ac 22.16; 1Co 12.3; 2Co 4.5; Ph 2.11); even to this day it is still part of the Orthodox baptismal rite, when the baptizand, having just renounced Satan, is required to 'confess Christ' and to 'bow down to him as King and Lord'. From early on, this confession lay at the heart of the confrontation between God's regime and imperial Rome. Jesus' resurrection showed that he really was the Messiah (1.4), the turning

¹³ *Rhēma* has the force of a speech-act more than of speech-content, for which the term would be *logos*. The underlying Hebrew is *dabar*, which can mean 'word, pronouncement, matter, affair, thing, action'. *Dabar* is also sometimes translated as *logos*.

point of Jewish and world history, the bearer of God's purposes, the climax of God's covenant. The resurrection was God's action (10.9; see also 1.4, 4.24). And when Paul locates belief in Jesus' resurrection in the 'heart' (10.9), he links the confession of Jesus as Lord with the enlightening of the heart that cures the problem of 1.21,24 and 2.5; that is, with the inward circumcision of 2.28-29, and the 'love of God poured out in our hearts' of 5.5 (see also 2.15; 6.17; 8.27). The very core of the personality is where renewal takes place, and belief in the resurrection is its telltale symptom. Belief in Jesus' resurrection is not an arbitrary dogmatic test, a demonstration that one is prepared to believe something untestable on the basis of someone's authority. Genuine heart-level faith comes about through the Spirit's action in the good news. Faith is the sure sign that the good news is doing its work.

It's worth noting in 10.10 that Paul doesn't normally speak of 'salvation by faith', but rather of 'righteousness by faith'. Righteousness and salvation are correlated but not identical. 'Righteousness' denotes the status people have on the basis of faith—a present legal status that anticipates their future verdict in God's court, a present covenantal status that anticipates their final, eschatological affirmation as members of God's people. 'Salvation' denotes their actual rescue from sin and death which was effected in the past by Jesus' resurrection, is anticipated in the present through faith and hope (so, e.g., 8.24), and will be made final at the judgment on the last day. 'Salvation' is not a status but an event, and it is promised to those who have 'righteousness' as their status.

c. Salvation for all who believe 10.11-13

The final chain of explanation in the sequence begins with a quote from Isa 28.16, already seen in 9.33, where Paul quoted it after the line about laying a stumbling-block in Zion: 'Everyone who believes in him shall not be ashamed'. This helps us to appreciate 10.1-11 as a whole, from the prayer about more Jews being saved, through the exposition of the messianic covenant renewal in which that prayer is answered, to the affirmation, in these final three verses, of salvation for all who believe. 'Not put to shame' (note the link with 1.16, 5.5, 9.33) is clearly equivalent to 'righteous' in 10.2-3 and to 'saved' in 10.13.

Paul has inserted the word 'everyone' into the line from Isaiah. He has done so because (*gar*) 'there is no distinction' between Jew and Greek (10.12a). In 3.22-23, 'no distinction' highlighted the fact that all alike were sinners; and that all alike are redeemed and justified by the faithfulness of the Messiah and through faith in God's covenant action in him, not some other way. Having brought to mind that earlier mention of 'sinners', the

argument has now moved on to the topics then outlined in 3.27-30: Jew and Gentile alike, justified according to the 'Torah of faith' come together in this common faith in the 'same Lord' (10.12b).

In Isa 28.16, 'whoever believes in him' refers to those who trust YHWH. Paul applies these words to those who trust in Jesus as Lord. The 'Lord' of Isa 28.16, though, is the *Kyrios* of the OT. He is now identified as the risen Messiah, the law's true fulfillment and goal, and in fact, 'God forever blessed' (9.5).

Caesar also claimed to be lord of all; Paul claims this title for Jesus (10.12). As in 3.27-30, monotheism undergirds the universality of the gospel—though, as elsewhere in Paul, it is monotheism with Jesus at the heart of it.

The quotation of Joel 2.32 (LXX 3.5) in 10.13 ('everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved') sits comfortably with Dt 30 as a powerful statement of how God will restore the fortunes of Israel after the devastating judgment of exile.

'Those who call on the name of the Lord' is a regular biblical designation for 'Israel'. Rm 10.13 is thus an exact functional equivalent of 11.26a: 'All Israel [=all who call on the name of the Lord] shall be saved.' So this initial answer to the problem of 10.1 (how shall Israel be saved?) is a corollary to the fact that 'there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek' (10.12), and will suggest the correct way of understanding 11.26a when we get there.

The Joel passage (Joel 2.32) also hints at the work of the Spirit in renewing the covenant. In fact the story of Pentecost in Ac 2.16-21 quotes the verses right before it (Joel 2.28-29). It is also thematically close to 2.27-29 and 8.1-11.

Other contemporary Jewish writers were concerned with the themes of Return from Exile and Covenant Renewal that occupy Paul in this section. Baruch, for example, spoke of the need to search for the true divine Wisdom, and the Dead Sea Scroll known as 4QMMT urged a tightening up of purity regulations, to bring about the time of the promise. Paul's reading of Dt 30.12-14 in 10.6-8 belongs with these, but for him, the Exile, the punishment of Israel's sin, reached its extreme point when Israel rejected the Messiah. Now, with his resurrection and universal lordship (10.9), the promised new order has begun, having been thrown open through his faithfulness, and a new way of 'keeping Torah' is available for those who trust in him as Lord, and in God who raised him from the dead. Paul's story of Israel from Abraham to covenant renewal (9.6-10.21) thus focuses not on the search for Wisdom (as in Baruch) or on tightening up on purity regulations (as in 4QMMT), but on

the Messiah's faithfulness, and it reaches its conclusion with Jew and Gentile coming together under the rule of the one Lord (10.12-13; cf. the same conclusion in 15.7-13 and the anticipations in 2.25-29; 3.27-31; 4.13-25).

The last part of the chapter (10.14-21) will now explore the mission by which God is actively seeking to include the Gentiles in his people (10.14-18), even as ethnic Israel remains hardened (10.19-21). This sets the scene for a discussion of future possibilities in the next chapter (Rm 11).

3. The worldwide mission 10.14-21

a. Gentile inclusion in God's people 10.14-18

The message of 10.5-13 was so positive and upbeat—God renewing the covenant through the dramatic, even apocalyptic, events concerning Jesus, and throwing open membership to everyone—that if Paul had stopped there we'd be wondering why the grief of 9.1-5, and the earnest prayer of 10.1? Surely all that is now needed is for the message of this new covenant to go forth! Sadly, no. The word of renewal is also the word of judgment, of God's confrontation with human wickedness, including Jewish wickedness (2.17-24). And the overarching problem of Rm 9–11 is that *Israel*, in particular, does not want to hear the message. Rm 10.14-21 takes the story forward into the new world that has come into being as a result of the messianic events, even as God's purposes meet Israel's recalcitrance. The statement of the apostolic mission and the heartbreak of Israel's refusal come together in the final part (10.14-21) of this section (9.30-10.21), and together set the scene for Rm 11.

Paul continues to emphasize faith that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead as the way to salvation for Jew as well as Greek (10.1-13). He celebrates his own apostleship to the Gentiles in order to provoke his Jewish kinsfolk to jealousy, and so to bring them to salvation. The key to this part of the chapter is 11.13-14, where Paul celebrates his apostolic vocation to preach to the Gentiles in order to make his 'flesh' jealous and so save some of them. Through a burst of rhetorical questions, Rm 10.14-15 explains that for the renewed covenant to operate, messengers need to be sent out with the news. This puts Paul himself on the map of biblical fulfillment (10.16-18): Isaiah 52-53 spoke of God's coming actions through the Messiah, and those who would take the message to the whole world (10.15, cf. Isa 52.7)¹⁴, even though not everyone would listen (10.16, cf. Isa 53.1). But, tragically (10.19-21), Israel according to the

flesh has remained largely aloof. They knew from their own prophecies, including Dt 32.21, which Paul will shortly quote, that God would bring the Gentiles to share their blessings; but they have remained untrusting. This is as close as Paul gets to an explicit statement of the problem that haunts Rm 9–11 as a whole. The passage is about more than simply 'Israel's accountability'; it is about the inclusion of Gentiles so as to make Israel 'jealous.'

In 10.14-17 Paul explains his mission to the Gentiles, looking back to his opening statement in 1.5, 'we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all nations, for his name'. 'Not everyone', though, has obeyed the gospel.¹⁵ He links this chain to the previous one by quoting the prophet's plaintive cry at the start of the Fourth Servant Song (Isa 52.13–53.12), 'Lord, who believed our report (*akoē*)?' (10.16, quoting Isa 53.1). The Fourth Servant Song is the context of Isa 52.7, just quoted in 10.15 ('How beautiful are the feet'). Mention of a 'report' (*akoē*) in 10.16 allows Paul to confirm the chain of events in 10.14-15 from a second angle, summarized in 10.17, 'faith comes by report (*akoē*), and the report by God's word (*rhēma*)'.

The word *rhēma* is rare in Paul, especially in such contexts as this; he usually prefers *logos*. But he is recalling the 'word' (*rhēma*) which one did not have to ascend to heaven or descend to the deep to find 'is near you' (10.8, cf. Dt 30.14, above). He is also linking to Ps 18.5, quoted in the next verse, where 'their words' (*rhēmata*) go out to the end of the earth'.

But when we put 10.17 ('faith comes by report, and the report by the word (*rhēma*) of the Messiah') alongside 10.8 ('the word (*rhēma*) is near you'), we see that the proclaimed report conveys that very 'word' (*rhēma*) which has come down from heaven and up from the depths of death, the Messiah himself, God's self-revelation, God's Wisdom, Torah in person.

But 'maybe [people] haven't heard'? (10.18). Well, Ps 19.5 [MT, LXX] says otherwise: 'their sound went out into all the world, and their words to the ends of the earth.' The psalm refers to God's glory displayed in the created order like the sunlight at noon. Obviously neither Paul nor all his fellow apostles nor even the church in the 21st century all put together has ever achieved missionary coverage that large! But in Col 1.23, Paul says the good news has been announced 'to every creature under heaven'. The resurrection of Jesus itself is the message,

¹⁴ Paul's Greek is closer to the Hebrew than to the LXX, whose first words appear to be garbled.

¹⁵ 'Accepted', NIV, is not a translation of *hypēkousan* ('obeyed'), but reflects instead the un-Pauline assumption that 'the gospel' is something offered to personal choice, rather than an authorized summons from the world's rightful Lord.

the 'word/act' (*rhēma*) that death has been defeated and that the world is now a different place. This message still has use of Paul as its 'minister.'

The world, then, has heard the gospel. Not all have believed; but, as Paul said in 9.30, Gentiles who were not looking for covenant membership have received it. Meanwhile, Israel, embracing the Torah, which did indeed hold out the prospect of 'righteousness', of covenant membership, has not attained to that Torah. Instead (and this is what is driving the whole section), Israel is just looking on as outsiders come to share the blessings that had been promised.

b. Israel remains hardened 10.19-21

But maybe Israel didn't know? (10.19a). 'Know' here is preferable to 'understand' (NRSV, NIV, etc); Paul's answers, quoting Dt 32 and Isa 65, don't demonstrate 'understanding' so much as that Israel actually actually had been warned long ago (and thus 'knew') that Gentiles would share, and even apparently take over, the blessings it had been promised. Israel could not claim ignorance of the point stated first in 9.30-31— that 'That the Gentiles, who weren't pursuing righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness that comes from faith'. It just resists. This is what the first two of four quotations are about.

The first is from Dt 32.21. Dt 32 is the song of Moses, a great poem mixing praise of God with a covenant lawsuit against Israel. It is clearly a significant passage for early Christian writers; there are three direct quotations from it in Romans alone.¹⁶ Dt 32.21 declares that as Israel has provoked YHWH to jealousy with idols that are not real gods, so YHWH will make them *jealous* with 'those who are not a people' (perhaps, in Paul's mind, an echo of 9.25-26). Paul takes this as a prophecy of God's call of Gentiles to enjoy Israel's privileges. In the next chapter he will use this key category of 'jealousy'— *which is not a silly psychological theory¹⁷ but a theological reference to an important and well-known text*— as the fulcrum of his crucial argument.

The second quotation, in 10.20, is from Isa 65.1, and leads to a third, in 10.21, which is from Isa 65.2. Isaiah, declares Paul (10.20), 'boldly dares'— a reference to the stark, almost horrifying content of what he says, more than to his state of mind— to announce the shocking result of the provoking to jealousy just mentioned in 10.19. The answer to the question, 'did Israel not know' that God would provoke her to the jealousy by 'those

who are no people' (10.19, cf Dt 32.21) is that in fact, the Gentiles, who were not seeking YHWH or membership in the chosen people, have found him (10.20), just as he said: 'I was found of those who were not seeking me' (Isa 65.1).

Isa 65 comes after a long prayer for God to intervene after Israel's devastation (63.15–64.12). This larger passage has several echoes in Romans 9–10. God is Israel's father, whether or not Abraham acknowledges it (63.16; cf. Rm 9.7-9); God has hardened their heart, making them go astray (63.17; cf. Rm 9.17-18); Israel's righteousness is like an unclean garment (64.6; cf. Rm 9.30–10.3); no one calls on YHWH's name (64.7; cf. Rm 10.13); but nevertheless God is the potter and Israel the clay (64.8; cf. Rm 9.20-23). And God's response is clear (65.1-2): 'I was found by those who were not looking for me; I said 'Look, here I am' to a nation that was not calling on my name'. Meanwhile, 'I stretched out my hands all day long to a rebellious people' (10.21, quoting Isa 65.2).

As in 9.30, 'the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith', and, as in 9.31-3, 'Israel, which pursued the Torah of righteousness, has not attained to the Torah of righteousness'.

The argument has thus come full circle. Paul has brought the story up to date. From Abraham to exodus, from the exile to the Messiah; and now that the Messiah has come, the new mode of covenant membership, of Torah-observance, of 'righteousness,' is open, and those who confess Jesus as Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead share not only this status but also the salvation promised as a result. Paul sees Gentiles entering this heritage as he announces the gospel around the world. He is praying that his fellow Jews may enter it too. But they must enter by the same door that the Gentiles have, which is the faith he's been talking about. At the present time, though, the majority are as Isaiah saw them: unwilling to countenance this fresh revelation from their God. The implied question of 9.1-5, and the prayer of 10.1, are thus left hanging in the air. What will happen next? Having told his version of the story about God and Israel in the past, Paul will now move cautiously to tell a story about God and Israel in the future.

¹⁶ Dt 32.21 here in 10.19, Dt 32.35 at 12.19; and Dt 32.43 at 15.10. Dt 32 is the Second Ode at Byzantine Matins.

¹⁷ Like, does anyone really imagine that the Israelis are jealous of the 'righteousness' of, say, the various patriarchates of Jerusalem?