

Romans 10:16-18 Commentary

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Click chart to enlarge
Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Romans Overview Chart](#) - Charles Swindoll

Source: Dr David Cooper
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ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	Gods Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God

Doctrine	Duty
Life by Faith	Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's chart above	

Rome in the Time of Paul (c. A.D. 60)

Summary of Romans 9-11		
Romans 9	Romans 10	Romans 11
Past Election	Present Rejection	Future Reception
God's Sovereignty Israel's Election by God	Man's responsibility Israel's Rejection of God	God's Ways Higher God Not Rejecting Israel

Romans 10:16 [However](#), they did not [all heed](#) (3PAAI) the [good news](#); for [Isaiah says](#) (3SPAI), "[LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED](#) (3SAAI) [OUR REPORT?](#)" ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [All' ou pantes hupekousan](#) (3PAAI) [to euaggelio](#); [Esaia's gar legei](#). (3SPAI), [Kurie, tis episteusen](#) (3SAAI) [te akoe hemon?](#)

Amplified: But they have not all heeded the Gospel; for Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed (had faith in) what he has heard from us? ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ESV: But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ([ESV](#))

ICB: But not all the Jews accepted the good news. Isaiah said, "Lord, who believed what we told them?" ([ICB: Nelson](#))

NIV: But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" ([NIV - IBS](#))

NKJV: But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

NLT: But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "Lord, who has believed our message?" ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Yet all who have heard have not responded to the Gospel. Isaiah asks, you remember, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: But not all lent an obedient ear to the good news. For Isaiah says, Lord, who believed our message?

Young's Literal: But they were not all obedient to the good tidings, for Isaiah saith, 'Lord, who did give credence to our report?'

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	WORK OF SALVATION

Related resources...

- Summary on the Attributes of God
- Spurgeon on the Attributes of God

- Israel of God - Is God "Finished" with Israel in His prophetic plan?
- [Off Site - Table Comparing/contrasting Israel & Church](#)
- [Off Site - Does the Church Fulfill Israel's Program? - John Walvoord](#)
- [The Jewish People, Jesus Christ and World History - S Lewis Johnson](#)

Are you confused about God's plan for Israel? Then I highly recommend Tony Garland's 12 Hour Course on **Romans 9-11** in which he addresses in depth the question of **What Will Happen to Israel?** ([click](#)) or see the individual lectures below)

- [Romans 9:1-5 Paul's Sorrow Concerning Israel](#)
- [Romans 9:6-13 Children of the Promise](#)
- [Romans 9:14-24 The Potter and the Clay](#)
- [Romans 9:25-33 A Remnant Will be Saved](#)
- [Romans 10:1-13 The Righteousness of God](#)
- [Romans 10:14-21 Has Israel Not Heard?](#)
- [Romans 11:1-6 God Has Not Cast Away The Jews](#)
- [Romans 11:7-15 Life from the Dead](#)
- [Romans 11:16-24 Two Olive Trees](#)
- [Romans 11:25-36 The Salvation of Israel](#)

Note that when you click the preceding links, each link will in turn give you several choices including an **Mp3 message** and brief transcript notes. The Mp3's are long (avg 70+ min) but are in depth and thoroughly Scriptural with many quotations from the Old Testament, which is often much less well understood than the NT by many in the church today. Garland takes a literal approach to Scripture, and his love for the Jews and passion to see them saved comes through very clearly in these 12 hours of teaching! Take your home Bible Study group through this series if you dare. Take notes on the tapes as the transcripts are a very abbreviated version of the audio messages. This course is highly recommended for all who love Israel! I think you will agree that Tony Garland, despite coming to faith after age 30 as an engineer, clearly has been given a special anointing by God to promulgate the truth concerning Israel and God's glorious future plan for the Jews. Garland has also produced more than 20 hours of superb audio teaching in his verse by verse commentary on the [Revelation](#) (in depth transcripts also available) which will unravel (in a way you did not think was possible considering the plethora of divergent interpretations) God's final message of the triumph and return of the our Lord Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords! Maranatha!

HOWEVER, THEY DID NOT ALL HEED THE GOOD NEWS (GLAD TIDINGS): All' ou pantes hupekousan (3PAAI) to euaggelio:

- Ro 3:3; 11:17; John 10:26; Acts 28:24; Hebrews 4:2; 1Peter 2:8) (Ro 1:5; 2:8; 6:17; 16:26; Isaiah 50:10; Galatians 3:1; 5:7; 2Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9; 11:8; 1Peter 1:22; 3:1
- Romans 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The KJV Bible Commentary sums up this section noting that...

Paul now comes to the crux of his argument concerning human responsibility and the righteousness of God. He claims that God takes the responsibility for Jewish unbelief and places it squarely upon the shoulders of the Jews. The gospel has been near unto them, it's been offered unto them, but it has not been believed by them. As proof of this he again quotes from the Jews' own Scripture as recorded in Isaiah 53:1 Lord, who hath believed our report? The report was Isaiah's message of the gospel concerning the Messiah. It was brought to the mouths of the Jews and offered to them, but that message was not obeyed. ([Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

UBS Handbook notes that...

Now Paul begins to show where the chain has broken. God has sent the messengers, the messengers have proclaimed the message, the Jews have heard the message, but they have not believed or called on the name of the Lord to be saved. Paul verifies this by a further appeal to scripture; this time the passage is from the Septuagint of Isaiah 53.1. ([The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series](#))

Guzik - If salvation is so simple, available to all who trust in the person and work of Jesus, then why does Israel seem to be cast off from God? Because many among them had not believed his report - because they have not trusted in God's Word through Isaiah

and other messengers of the gospel, they are not saved. ([Romans 10 Commentary](#))

They - Although Paul had earlier stated there was no distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Ro 10:12) in regard to whom righteousness by faith was offered, in the context of this chapter, Paul is referring primarily to Jews, the people of Israel, who heard the good news. They heard but did not heed, except for a believing **believing Jewish remnant** (Ro 9:27-note). For example, some of the Jews clearly wanted to hear Paul's views (Acts 28:22) and some in this group apparently not only heard but heeded, Luke recording...

Some (of leading men of the Jews [Ac 28:17] who were listening to Paul while he was under "house arrest" [Ac 28:16, 20] in Rome) **were being persuaded** (peitho [word study] in the imperfect tense) by **the things spoken** [see what Paul spoke in Ac 28:23], but others would not believe. (Acts 28:24)

James Denney however notes that "The fact remains, however, in spite of this universal preaching, that there has not been a universal surrender to the gospel. Not all; the Jews are present to the writer's mind here, though the words might apply more widely; hence, the compassionate mode of statement ... Yet this quantum of unbelief does not discomfit the apostle, for it also as well as the proclamation of the gospel, is included in prophecy. ([Romans 10 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

They did not all heed the good news - Notice that "**heed**" or obey is used in this verse as synonymous with believe. (See related topic - **Obedience of faith**). Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is inextricably linked with obedience. There are many in our day who see no clear and vital relationship between **faith** and **obedience** (or "**heeding**" as in Ro 10:16).

The **writer of Hebrews** alludes to this tragic failure of the Jews to heed the good news "For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by **faith** in those who **heard**. (He 4:2-note)

Peter (who like Paul also appeals to the OT) put it this way...

This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED (Ps 118:22), THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*, a STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE" (Isa 8:14, cp Ro 9:32, 33-note) for they stumble because they are **disobedient** (cp Acts 19:9) (apeitheo in the present tense = as their habitual response) to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. (1Pe 2:7, 8-note)

Comment: BKC = To **disobey** the message (cf. 1Pe 4:17-note) is to **reject** it; and to **obey** it is to **believe** (cf. obedience in 1Pe 1:14-note, 1Pe 1:22-note and "obedient to the faith" in Acts 6:7). All who do not receive Christ as their Savior will one day face Him as their Judge (2Ti 4:1, Jn 5:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 3:18, 19, 36). Because of sin, all disobedient unbelievers are destined for a "**stumbling**," which will lead to eternal condemnation. ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

J Vernon McGee quips "While we are amazed at the great number of folk who tell us that they have received Christ because of our ministry, when we look at the total picture, it is a very small minority. Who has believed our report? Not very many. (Listen to his gravelly voice on [Mp3 - Romans 10:16-21](#))

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEEDING

Listen to what some of the giants of the Christian faith have to say about **faith and heeding** or **obedience**.

Therefore everyone who **hears** these words of Mine, and **acts** upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. (Mt 7:24-note) — The Lord Jesus Christ

On the contrary. Blessed are those who **hear** the word of God, and **observe** it. (Luke 11:28) — The Lord Jesus Christ when someone sought to bestow blessing on his mother Mary

Faith is the fountain, the foundation and the fosterer of **obedience**. — C. H. Spurgeon

Faith and **obedience** are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God; and he that trusts God, obeys God. — C. H. Spurgeon

Obedience is the hallmark of **faith**. — C. H. Spurgeon

When a person truly **trusts** Christ, he or she will **obey** Him. — Warren Wiersbe

We see in the flood account (we see that) God has always saved people the same way: by grace (Genesis 6:8), through **faith** (Heb. 11:7-note)... (and) **True faith** leads to **obedience** (6:22; 7:5). — Warren Wiersbe

James 2:14-26 (see notes) discusses the relationship between faith and works, and James uses this event to

illustrate his main point: **true faith** is always proved by **obedience**.— Warren Wiersbe

Hebrews 11:17-19-notes indicates that Abraham believed that God could even raise Isaac from the dead! In short, Abraham proved his faith by his works. His obedience to the Word was evidence of his faith in the Word. His **faith** was made perfect (brought to maturity) in his act of **obedience**. — Warren Wiersbe

The threefold purpose of the Bible is to inform, to inspire faith and to secure obedience. Whenever it is used for any other purpose, it is used wrongly and may do actual injury. The Holy Scriptures will do us good only as we present an open mind to be taught, a tender heart to **believe** and a surrendered will to **obey**.— A W Tozer

The best measure of a spiritual life is not its ecstasies but its obedience. —Oswald Chambers

The message of the gospel is to call people to the **obedience of faith**, which is here used as a synonym for salvation... It is not that faith plus obedience equals salvation but that obedient faith equals salvation. True faith is verified in obedience. Obedient faith proves itself true, whereas disobedient faith proves itself false. It is for having true faith, that is, obedient faith, that Paul goes on to commend the Roman believers... Together, **faith** and **obedience** manifest the inseparable two sides of the coin of salvation, which Paul here calls the obedience of faith. — John MacArthur ([Romans](#))

Faith is the starting-post of **obedience**. — Thomas Chalmers

Obedience to the **faith** is very important to God. God saves us by faith, not by works; but after He has saved us, He wants to talk to us about our works, about our obedience to Him. I hear many people talk about believing in Jesus, then they live like the Devil and seem to be serving him. My friend, **saving faith** makes you **obedient** to Jesus Christ.— J Vernon McGee

Faith and **obedience** are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God; and he that trusts God, obeys God. — C. H. Spurgeon

Obedience is the hallmark of **faith**, and the proof of grace; but Judas and others worked miracles, and were lost.— C. H. Spurgeon

He does not believe that does not live according to his belief. — Thomas Fuller

Let the acts of the offspring indicate similarity to the Father. — Augustine

It is faith alone that justifies, but the faith that justifies is not alone. —John Calvin

If we would know whether our faith is genuine, we do well to ask ourselves how we are living. — J. C. Ryle

The Bible recognizes no **faith** that does not lead to **obedience**, nor does it recognize any **obedience** that does not spring from **faith**. The two are opposite sides of the same coin.— A W Tozer

Faith that saves has one distinguishing quality; saving faith is a **faith** that produces **obedience**, it is a faith that brings about a way of life. — Billy Graham

Only he who **believes** is **obedient**; only he who is obedient believes. —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Believing and **obeying** always run side by side. — C. H. Spurgeon

What saves is faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. —J. I. Packer

Faith must have adequate evidence, else it is mere superstition. — A. A. Hodge

True, God-exalting **obedience** comes from **faith**. Any other kind of obedience is not true obedience at all. — John Piper

Faith alone unites us to Christ and Christ alone is the ground of our justification. Our **obedience** is the fruit of that faith. The faith that justifies is the kind of faith that, by the Holy Spirit (Ro 8:13-note), changes us. If your faith in Christ leaves you unchanged, you don't have saving faith. Obedience—not perfection, but a new direction of thought and affections and behavior—is the fruit that shows that the faith is alive. James put it this way, "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone. It is always accompanied by "newness of life" (Ro 6:4-note). — John Piper ([Sermon entitled - Command of God: The Obedience of Faith](#))

**OUR LIFE
SHOULD "VALIDATE"
OUR LIPS!**

If lips and life do not agree, the testimony will not amount to much. —Harry Ironside

In His Word, God tells us again and again that as believing children we are to live by faith and we are to walk by faith. This reference is to God's believing, trusting people and to the kind of faith that is saving faith. There are many other brands of faith being displayed in our world today. Saving faith—biblical faith—is on the highest level, for it is the life of **trust** and **obedience** that our Lord requires of us.— A W Tozer

The difficulty we modern Christians face is not misunderstanding the Bible, but persuading our untamed hearts to accept its plain instructions. Our problem is to get the consent of our world-loving minds to make Jesus Lord in fact as well as in word. For it is one thing to say, "Lord, Lord," and quite another thing to obey the Lord's commandments. We may sing, "Crown Him Lord of all," and rejoice in the tones of the loud-sounding organ and the deep melody of harmonious voices, but still we have done nothing until we have left the world and set our faces toward the city of God in hard practical reality. When **faith** becomes **obedience** then it is **true faith** indeed. — A W Tozer

A visitor, passing through a certain department of a large shop, noticed a set of regulations written on a blackboard. He also noticed that, in several particulars, every man in the shop was disregarding them. He questioned the foreman concerning the matter. At first the man was reluctant about answering him. Finally he said, "Those rules were written by one of the firm. He has neither wisdom nor judgment. If we should follow his directions, we would ruin a good part of the work." The men took their own way because they lacked faith in their commander. However else we may characterize it, failure to **obey** is simply lack of **faith**.— Bible Illustrations

The man that believes will obey; failure to obey is convincing proof that there is not true faith present. — A W Tozer

THE GREAT TRAGEDY!

Middletown Bible observes...

How tragic! God has good news, and men don't want it! They reject God's offer of peace (Ro 10:15-note). They reject God's invitation to be saved (Ro 10:13-note). They reject God's riches (Ro 10:12-note). They reject God's so-great salvation (Ro 10:9-note). They reject God's righteousness (Ro 10:3-note). It is the tragedy of man's foolish unbelief! They have not all obeyed the gospel. Indeed, the great majority of people have DISOBEYED the gospel (cp this idea of "obedience" = Jn 3:36, 1Pe 4:17-note, Acts 6:7 Ro 1:5-note, Ro 2:8-note, Ro 15:18, 19-note, Ro 16:26-note Ga 5:7, 2Th 1:8 Heb 5:9-note).

How does a person disobey the gospel? By refusing to believe it! God's commandment is clearly seen in 1Jn 3:23 (the first part of the verse), and those who disobey this command are disobedient to the gospel. Isaiah the prophet anticipated this terrible unbelief in the first verse of that important 53rd chapter which speaks of the Messiah dying for our sins. "Who hath believed our report?" Not many! **How sad that the vast majority of Jews reject the great message of Isaiah 53 even to this day (and the majority of Gentiles do as well!).**

"And to whom is the arm (symbol of strength and power) of the LORD revealed (uncovered, discovered)?" (Isa 53:1b) The gospel is hidden to those who are lost (2Cor 4:3, 4) and the message of the cross is "foolishness" to them (1Cor.1:18) but unto us who are saved it is the power of God (1Co1:18,24; Ro1:16-note). Isaiah 53:1 found its fulfillment in John 12:37, 38, and it is still being fulfilled today as men and women reject the gospel of God's grace (Ac 20:24) and refuse to trust the Son of God, the only Saviour (Acts 4:12, Jn 14:6). ([Romans Chapter 10](#)) (Bolding added)

Heed (5219) (hupakouo [word study] from **hupó** = agency or means, under + **akoúo** physical hearing and apprehension of something with the mind - **akouo** gives us our English acoustics - the science of design which helps one hear) (Click word study on related noun **hupakoe**) literally means to listen under with attentiveness and to respond positively to what is heard. The sense is that one understands and responds accordingly. To "listen or hear under" conveys the idea of subordinating one's self to the person or thing heard, and hence to obey. It means to hearken (give respectful attention) or to listen attentively in order to answer or respond. Note that hupakouo implies an inward attitude of respect and honor, as well as external acts of obedience. Obedience on the part of children consists in listening to the advice given by parents. In Genesis 22 Isaac's willingness to be offered as a sacrifice is a model of such submission.

The sense is that one understands and responds accordingly. Note that **hupakouo** implies an inward attitude of respect and honor,

as well as external acts of obedience.

Paul cites Isaiah 53:1 which introduces an extremely detailed prophecy of the redemptive work of Jesus. This clear passage is avoided or denied by unbelieving Jews. The problem is not **hearing**, but **believing** (heeding)!

Faith and **obedience** are closely related, **C H Spurgeon** writing that...

Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God; and he that trusts God, obeys God.

If you desire Christ for a perpetual guest, give him all the keys of your heart; let not one cabinet be locked up from him; give him the range of every room and the key of every chamber.

Good News (2098) (**euaggelion** from **eú** = good + **aggéllo** = proclaim, tell) means good news, glad tidings, Saxon = gōd-spell = lit. "good tale, message". **Euaggelion** originally referred to a reward for good news and later became the good news itself. The word **euaggelion** was in just as common use in the first century as our words good news today. "Have you any good news for me today?" would have been a common question. In this secular use **euaggelion** described **good news** of any kind and prior to the writing of the New Testament, had no definite religious connotation in the ancient world until it was taken over by the "Cult of Caesar" which was the state religion and in which the emperor was worshipped as a god (see more discussion of this use below).

Euaggelion was commonly used in the Greco-Roman culture as "a technical term for "news of victory." The messenger appears, raises his right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice: "rejoice ...we are victorious". By his appearance it is known already that he brings good news. His face shines, his spear is decked with laurel, his head is crowned, he swings a branch of palms, joy fills the city, euaggelia are offered, the temples are garlanded, an agon (race) is held, crowns are put on for the sacrifices and the one to whom the message is owed is honored with a wreath... [thus] euaggelion is closely linked with the thought of victory in battle." (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) This is a convicting definition - here a pagan messenger radiantly announces good news of an earthly victory. How much more radiant should we be who are the bearers of the great news of Christ's eternal triumph over sin, Satan, and death!

The writers of the New Testament adapted the term as God's message of salvation for lost sinners. **Euaggelion** is found in several combination phrases, each describing the gospel like a multifaceted jewel in various terms from a different viewpoint (from the NASB, 1977): "the gospel of the kingdom" (Mt 4:23), "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1) because it centers in Christ, "the gospel of God" (Mk 1:14) because it originates with God and was not invented by man, "the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Lk 16:16), "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), "the gospel of His Son" (Ro 1:9-note), "the gospel of Christ" (Ro 15:19-note), "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2Co 4:4), "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13-note), "the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15-note), "the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2Th 1:8), "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1Ti 1:11)

FOR ISAIAH SAYS LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT: Esaias gar legei (3SPA1) kurie, tis episteusen (3SAAI) te akoe hemon:

- John 12:38, 39, 40
- Romans 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ISAIAH'S QUESTION

For (**gar**) introduces an explanation. Always pause and ponder this strategic **term of explanation**.

For Isaiah says - In this passage Paul quotes from the great chapter on "The Suffering Servant"...

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (Isaiah 53:1)

What is the **"report"** Isaiah is referring to? Here it is... Isaiah 53:2-12

2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

The **report** Paul refers to is the glorious **message** of the death of the Messiah (Is 53:5, 7, 8, 9, 12) and His substitutionary bearing of our sins (Is 53:4, 53:6b, Is 53:10, 11), the glorious truth which constitutes the good news of the gospel.

Who has believed our report? - Paul's rhetorical question in the original Greek construction expects a negative answer.

Report (189) (**akoe** from verb **akoúō** = to hear) is literally the ability to hear and then can refer to the act of hearing (i.e., listening) and finally to what is heard (a report or news as in Jn 12:38 = "who has believed our **report**" and here in Ro 10:16). The essence of **akoe** in this verse then is "the thing heard" and thus "a report".

Paul proves not all of Israel would obey His Word. As noted Isaiah 53:1 introduced one of the greatest messianic chapters in the OT. Traditionally and tragically, Jewish scholars have misapplied (cp suppressed the truth in unrighteousness = Ro 1:18-note) the truths of Isaiah 53 to the nation of Israel rather than to an individual Person, the Messiah. However it is worth noting that many ancient rabbis did interpret Isaiah 53 as presenting a picture of a **suffering Messiah** who would bear the sins of His people (see the discourse between Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch regarding the meaning of Isaiah 53 in Acts 8:26-40).

In Isaiah's day, the people did not believe God's Word, nor did they believe when the Living Word was in their very midst. John 12:37ff records that...

though He (Jesus) had performed so many signs before them, **yet they were not believing in Him**; 38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, (quoting Isaiah 53:1)

LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED? (Jn 12:38)

For this cause they could not believe (they refused the light they had), for Isaiah said again,

HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART; LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED, AND I HEAL THEM (quoting from Isaiah 6:10 "*Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.*") The Israelites in Isaiah's day had already hardened their hearts against the Lord, and His retributive judgment on them had already begun when Isaiah received his commission. The point is that when they would hear Isaiah's prophetic message, God explained that they would become even more hardened against the Lord.)

These things Isaiah said, because he saw His (Jesus') glory (In Isaiah 6:1ff), and he spoke of Him. (John 12:37, 38, 39, 40, 41)

John cites **Isaiah 53:1** to explain how the nation saw Christ's miracles and still refused to believe. Because they **would** not believe,

judgment came on them and they **could** not believe. (cp 2Co 3:14, 15, 16).

Steven Cole - Perhaps you've seen the TV commercial where some people from the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes knock on someone's door to tell him that he has just won \$5 million. The winner is delirious with joy, leaping in the air, crying, laughing, and hardly believing that this could be true. But imagine that when the folks from Publisher's Clearinghouse tell the guy that he's won \$5 million, he pulls out a gun and says, "Get off my property or I'll blow your brains out!" "What? But, sir, you don't understand. We're giving you good news! You've just won a fortune!" But he belligerently snarls, "I said, 'Get off my property now!'" That's the contrast between Romans 10:15-16. In verse 15 we read (citing Isa. 52:7), "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" The good news is the message of salvation. Even though you've sinned against the holy God and deserve His judgment, He offers a complete pardon to anyone who will receive it. As Ro 10:13 says, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." But in verse 16 we read, "However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says [citing Isa. 53:1], 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"

It's staggering! God sends messengers with the best news in the world, that God is ready to pardon any sinner who will receive His offer of grace and kindness. Not only that, but God paid a great price to provide this pardon. As Isaiah 53 goes on to reveal, He sent His Messiah, the suffering servant, who would be "pierced through for our transgressions," and "crushed for our iniquities." "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isa 53:5, 6). But a suffering servant didn't fit with Israel's idea of a Messiah. They wanted a conquering king to defeat all their enemies and provide a comfy life for them. They didn't like all this talk about them being sinners who needed a Savior to die in their place. So they slammed the door on the best news in the world.

In Romans 10, Paul is still dealing with the subject that caused him great sorrow and unceasing grief (Ro 9:2), namely, why are most of the Jews rejecting Jesus as their Savior? He is expounding on what he wrote in Ro 9:30-33, where he explains that the Jews were rejecting Christ because they were pursuing righteousness by works. But the Gentiles, who had not even been pursuing God, were being saved because they welcomed Christ by faith.

He builds his case from the Old Testament, citing Scripture in Ro 10:16, 18, 19, 20, 21. He wants to show that the Jews' rejection of Christ, as well as the Gentiles' reception of Him, should not be surprising, since it was predicted centuries before in the Scriptures. He's explaining why some people are lost and some are saved:

Because of disobedient, hard hearts, many do not believe the gospel and are lost; because of God's sovereign grace, others believe the gospel and are saved.

When the good news is preached, some hear it, believe it, and call upon the Lord to save them (Ro 10:14). But sadly, others stumble over the stumbling stone (Ro 9:32), reject Jesus Christ, and head toward eternal judgment.

What makes the difference? I'm going to state what the Bible plainly teaches, although I cannot explain how both statements are true: If someone is saved, it is totally due to God choosing him before the foundation of the world, effectually calling him to Christ, and saving him by His grace alone (Ro 8:30; Ro 9:11-23). If someone is lost, he is totally responsible for his disobedient, hard heart that rejects God's grace (10:21; Prov. 1:24). In other words, if you believe in Christ, it is only because God had mercy on you. If He had not intervened, you would still be in your sins, headed for eternal judgment. But if you do not believe in Christ and reject His gracious offer of salvation, you are completely to blame. You cannot blame God for not choosing you. Your sinful unbelief is totally your own fault.

C. H. Spurgeon put it (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit [Pilgrim Publications], 4:337): "That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment." He goes on to say that these two truths will be welded into one in eternity, when we see that both flow from God's throne.

1. Because of disobedient, hard hearts, many do not believe the gospel and are lost. Paul jumps back and forth in these verses between unbelief (10:16), belief (10:17), unbelief (10:18, 19), belief (Ro 10:20), and unbelief (Ro 10:21). First we'll look at the verses dealing with unbelief and then we'll look at those that describe faith in Christ.

A. NOT OBEYING THE GOSPEL IS THE SAME AS NOT BELIEVING THE GOSPEL (Ro 10:16). Romans 10:16: "However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'" They refers to the Jews, as Ro 10:19, 21 specify. By extension, it applies also to unbelieving Gentiles, but Paul's focus here is on the question of why most of the Jews were rejecting Christ. When Paul says that "not all" heeded the good news, he is using understatement to mean, "most" did not obey the gospel.

Heed means to submit to or obey (Paul used this word in Rom. 6:12, 16, 17). Since Paul goes on to cite Isaiah 53:1, "Lord, who has

believed our report?” why doesn’t he say, “However, they did not all believe the good news”? Why does he say, “They did not all heed [obey] the good news”? Is he teaching salvation by works?

Of course not! He has just indicted the Jews because they pursued righteousness by works and not by faith (Ro 9:32). Rather, Paul understood and taught the same thing that James taught (James 2:14-26), that genuine faith by its very nature always results in good works. If someone claims to have faith, but lives in disobedience to God, his claim is false. Genuine saving faith is the root that necessarily bears the fruit of godliness. Many will claim, “Lord, Lord,” but they do not obey Jesus as Lord. He will condemn these hypocrites on judgment day (Matt. 7:21-23). Thus Paul begins and ends Romans (Ro 1:5; 16:26) talking about “**the obedience of faith**.” Or, as 1 John 2:3 explains, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

Also, it’s important to realize that the gospel does not come to us as a nice suggestion that you may want to consider. It comes to us as a command from God Himself. Mark 1:15 summarizes Jesus’ message: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Repent and believe are commands. Or, as Paul told the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:30-31), “God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

So if you have not repented of your sins, believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and submitted to Him as your Lord, you are in disobedience to the God who is the Judge of the living and the dead. If you were to die in this state of rebellion against God, you would face His eternal judgment. ([Why Some are Lost and Some are Saved Romans 10:16-21](#))

Romans 10:17 [So faith](#) comes from [hearing](#), and [hearing](#) by the [word](#) of [Christ](#). (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [ara e pistis](#) ex [akoes](#), [e de akoe dia rhematos Christou](#).

Amplified: So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ESV: So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ([ESV](#))

ICB: So faith comes from hearing the Good News. And people hear the Good News when someone tells them about Christ. ([ICB: Nelson](#))

NIV: Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. ([NIV - IBS](#))

NKJV: So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

NLT: Yet faith comes from listening to this message of good news--the Good News about Christ. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: (Belief you see, can only come from hearing the message, and the message is the word of Christ.) ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: So then, faith is out of the source of that which is heard, and that which is heard [the message] is through the agency of the Word concerning Christ.

Young's Literal: so then the faith is by a report, and the report through a saying of God,

SO FAITH COMES FROM HEARING: ara e pistis ex akoes:

- Ro 10:14; 1:16; Luke 16:29, 30, 31; 1Corinthians 1:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24; Colossians 1:4, 5, 6; 1Thessalonians 2:13; 2Thessalonians 2:13,14; Jas 1:18, 19, 20, 21; 1Peter 1:23, 24, 25; 2:1,2
- Romans 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

So then faith from hearing, but hearing through the word of Christ (Literal)

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (NIV)

So faith comes from hearing - The gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit and is heard. The same Spirit births faith in the gospel message in the hearts of the elect. This is a supernatural transaction which saved sinners have the awesome privilege to

participate in and cooperate with God's Spirit, by obediently speaking forth the word of truth by which God brings new birth! (cp Jas 1:18-note, Jn 3:7, 8)

Comes from hearing - Literally out of a report.

Morris - Hearing is a reflection of first-century life. Paul does not raise the possibility of the message being read. While there were people who could read, the ordinary first-century citizen depended rather on being able to hear something. ([Defender's Study Bible](#))

The KJV Bible Commentary emphasizes that "We must understand that hearing alone does not bring salvation, but faith in the message heard does. The heathen is not saved by looking at a tree and conceptualizing a god-form represented in that tree. The moralist is not saved by leading a moral life-style. Salvation comes when the message of the gospel is preached, believed, and then confessed by men. That message must come from the Word of God (or "Word of Christ"). ([Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

Haldane - Faith, then, never comes but by **hearing**, that is, by the word of God (word of Christ). The Apostles communicated their testimony by the living voice, and by their writings. Both are comprehended in what is called **hearing**. All this showed the necessity of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, on which Paul had been insisting, according to which there is no such thing as saving faith among heathens who have not heard of Christ. ([Romans 10 Commentary Online](#))

D L Moody once said "I prayed for faith and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God**" I had up to this time closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since.

Jameison writes that "This is another confirmation of the truth that **faith** supposes the **hearing** of the **Word**, and this a commission to preach it." ([Romans 10 - Bible Commentary](#))

Paul says that faith is aroused by hearing. If you hear a message, then you either have to believe it or disbelieve it. Your faith is aroused by the message. But if it is to be saving faith, he says, it must be a word about Christ.

GENUINE FAITH

Guzik writes that "Saving faith comes through hearing by the word of God. Although Israel heard, they did not exercise saving faith in Christ - making them (and us) all the more responsible. ([Romans 10 Commentary](#))

Faith ([4102](#))(**pistis** [**word study**]) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. As **pistis** relates to God, it is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith relates to Christ it represents a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Stated another way, eternal salvation comes **only** through belief in Jesus Christ and no other way.

Scotfield wrote that "The essence of faith consists in believing and receiving what God has revealed, and may be defined as that trust in the God of the Scriptures and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent, which receives Him as Lord and Savior and impels to loving obedience and good works (John 1:12; James 2:14-26-note).

Biblical faith is not synonymous with mental assent or acquiescence which by itself is not genuine (saving) faith. For example, the apostle John gives a dramatic example of belief that fell short of genuine saving belief in John 8:30-59. The apostle records that when Jesus addressed those Jews "**who had believed him**" (John 8:31), their subsequent actions demonstrated that their belief was not genuine. In this exchange Jesus accused them of "**seeking to kill Me**" (John 8:40) declaring that these "believers" were of their father the devil (John 8:44). After several heated exchanges, these same "believing" Jews "fulfilled prophecy" proving what and who they really believed as they actually proceeded to try to kill Jesus, picking "**up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.**" (John 8:59).

True faith that saves one's soul includes at least three main elements (1) firm persuasion or firm conviction, (2) a surrender to that truth and (3) a conduct emanating from that surrender. In sum, faith shows itself genuine by a changed life. ([Click here](#) for **W E Vine's** similar definition of **faith**)

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;

Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.
—Augustus M. Toplady

The highly respected theologian **Louis Berkhof** defines genuine faith in essentially the same way noting that it includes an intellectual element (*notitia*), which is "*a positive recognition of the truth*"; an emotional element (*assensus*), which includes "*a deep conviction of the truth*"; and a volitional element (*fiducia*), which involves "*a personal trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, including a surrender ... to Christ.*" ([Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1939](#))

Little faith will bring your soul to heaven; great faith will bring heaven to your soul. — C. H. Spurgeon

What saves us is faith in Christ, not faith in our faith, or faith in the faith.—Augustus H. Strong

Saving faith is resting faith, the trust which relies entirely on the Saviour. —John R. W. Stott

Tozer writes that...

True faith is not the intellectual ability to visualize unseen things to the satisfaction of our imperfect minds; it is rather the moral power to trust Christ. To be contented and unafraid when going on a journey with his father the child need not be able to imagine events; he need but know the father. Our earthly lives are one shining web of golden mystery which we experience without understanding, how much more our life in the Spirit. Jesus Christ is our all in all. We need but trust Him and He will take care of the rest... God has not failed me in this world; I can trust Him for the world to come.

Faith and morals are two sides of the same coin. Indeed the very essence of faith is moral. Any professed faith in Christ as personal Saviour that does not bring the life under plenary obedience to Christ as Lord is inadequate and must betray its victim at the last. The man that believes will obey. God gives faith to the obedient heart only. Where real repentance is, there is obedience.

True faith brings a spiritual and moral transformation and an inward witness that cannot be mistaken. These come when we stop believing in belief and start believing in the Lord Jesus Christ indeed.

Faith is not optimism, though it may breed optimism; it is not cheerfulness, though the man of faith is likely to be a reasonably cheerful; it is not a vague sense of well-being or a tender appreciation for the beauty of human togetherness. Faith is confidence in God's self-revelation as found in the Holy Scriptures.

To believe savingly in Jesus Christ is to believe all He has said about Himself and all that the prophets and apostles have said about Him. Let us beware that the Jesus we "accept" is not one we have created out of the dust of our imagination and formed after our own likeness. True faith commits us to obedience. That dreamy, sentimental faith which ignores the judgments of God against us and listens to the affirmations of the soul is as deadly as cyanide. Faith in faith is faith astray. To hope for heaven by means of such faith is to drive in the dark across a deep chasm on a bridge that does not quite reach the other side. (Of God and Men)

The faith of Paul and Luther was a revolutionizing thing. It upset the whole life of the individual and made him into another person altogether. It laid hold on the life and brought it under obedience to Christ. It had a finality about it. It snapped shut on a man's heart like a trap. It realigned all life's actions and brought them into accord with the will of God.

To escape the error of salvation by works we have fallen into the opposite error of salvation without **obedience**.

A whole new generation of Christians has come up believing that it is possible to "accept" Christ without forsaking the world.

Faith, as Paul saw it, was a living, flaming thing leading to surrender and obedience to the commandments of Christ.

Real faith invariably produces **holiness of heart** and **righteousness of life**.

If our **faith** is to have a firm foundation we must be convinced beyond any possible doubt that God is altogether worthy of our trust... A promise is only as good as the one who made it, but it is as good, and from this knowledge springs our assurance. By cultivating the knowledge of God we at the same time cultivate our **faith**...

True faith rests upon the character of God and asks no further proof than the moral perfections of the One who cannot lie. It is enough that God said it, and if the statement should contradict every one of the five senses and all the conclusions of logic as well, still the believer continues to believe. "Let God be true, but every man a liar" is the language of true faith. Heaven approves such faith because it rises above mere proofs and rests in the bosom of God...

Faith as the Bible knows it is confidence in God and His Son Jesus Christ; it is the response of the soul to the divine character as revealed in the Scriptures; and even this response is impossible apart from the prior inworking of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a gift of God to a penitent soul and has nothing whatsoever to do with the senses or the data they afford. Faith is a miracle; it is the ability God gives to trust His Son, and anything that does not result in action in accord with the will of God is not faith but something else short of it.

Faith is at the foundation of all Christian living, and because faith has to do with the character of God, it is safe from all vacillations of mood. A man may be believing soundly and effectively even when his mood is low, so low that he is hardly aware that he is alive emotionally at all.

True faith is not an end; it is a means to an end. It is not a destination; it is a journey, and the initial act of believing in Christ is a gate leading into the long lane we are to travel with Christ for the rest of our earthly days. That journey is hard and tired, but it is wonderful also, and no one ever regretted the weariness when he came to the end of the road.

Maclaren writes that

Faith is the hand that grasps. It is the means of communication, it is the channel through which the grace which is the life, or, rather, I should say, the life which is the grace, comes to us. It is the open door by which the angel of God comes in with his gifts. It is like the petals of the flowers, opening when the sunshine kisses them, and, by opening, laying bare the depths of their calyxes to be illuminated and coloured, and made to grow by the sunshine which itself has opened them, and without the presence of which, within the cup, there would have been neither life nor beauty. So faith is the basis of everything; the first shoot from which all the others ascend... **Faith works**. It is the foundation of all true work; even in the lowest sense of the word we might almost say that. But in the Christian scheme it is eminently the underlying requisite for all work which God does not consider as busy idleness...

Your work of faith. There is the whole of the thorny subject of the relation of faith and works packed into a nutshell. It is exactly what James said and it is exactly what a better than James said. When the Jews came to Him with their externalism, and thought that God was to be pleased by a whole rabble of separate good actions, and so said, 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?' Jesus said, 'Never mind about Works. This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,' and out of that will come all the rest. That is the mother tincture; everything will flow from that. So Paul says, 'Your work of faith.'

Does your faith work? Perhaps I should ask other people rather than you. Do men see that your faith works; that its output is different from the output of men who are not possessors of a 'like precious faith'? Ask yourselves the question, and God help you to answer it. (Read full sermon on 1 Thessalonians 1:3)

THE NECESSITY OF HEARING

Comes from hearing - Literally out of a report.

Hendriksen notes that "The great importance Paul attached to hearing immediately reminds one of Jesus. In all Christ's teaching, both on earth and from heaven, it would be difficult to discover any exhortation which he repeated more often, in one form or another, than the one about hearing; better still: listening (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk 4:9, 23; Lk 8:8; 14:35; Re 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9). (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. Vol. 12-13: New Testament Commentary : Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House)

Hearing ([189](#)) (**akoe** from verb **akoúō** = to hear) is literally the ability to hear and then can refer to the act of hearing (i.e., listening) and finally to what is heard (as in the previous verse = Ro 10:16).

Morris writes that "**Hearing** is a reflection of first-century life. Paul does not raise the possibility of the message being read. While there were people who could read, the ordinary first-century citizen depended rather on being able to hear something." ([Defender's Study Bible Notes](#))

So that word **hearing** (two times in Ro 10:17) is the same Greek word as the word **report** in Ro 10:16. For a person to be saved there must be a **report** or **message** that is heard, and this **report** or **message** must be **believed**. How can one obtain saving faith? He must hear the message of God's Word and respond to it in a positive way. God's Word is powerful (Heb 4:12-note), effectual (1Th 2:13-note), alive (Jn 6:63,68; He 4:12-note), penetrating (He 4:1-note; Ep 6:17-note), able to make a person wise unto salvation (2Ti 3:15-note).

Man's faith must fix itself upon God's facts and God's facts are found in the Word of God. Clearly, as Paul has just said in Ro 10:16, not everyone who hears the Biblical gospel will be saved. But what it does mean is that no one will be saved without hearing the Biblical gospel.

Charles Hodge writes that the preceding quotation in Ro 10:16 from Isa 53:1 "speaks of a "message," something addressed to the ear. The purpose of that message was that men should believe. They were required to receive it and depend upon it as true. Without it there could be no basis for faith, nothing on which faith could rest. Therefore faith comes from hearing. It is receiving the message as the truth. But this message is from the Word or command of God. It is therefore a sure foundation of faith. And if everyone is required to believe, the message should be sent to everyone, and the divine command on which it rests must include an injunction to make the proclamation universal. Thus the two ideas presented in the context — namely, the necessity of knowledge for faith, and the purpose of God to extend that knowledge to the Gentiles — are both confirmed in this verse. ([Romans 10 Commentary - Online](#))

AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF CHRIST: e de akoe dia rhematos Christou

- Mk 4:24; Lk 8:11,21; 2Co 2:17; Re 1:9
- Romans 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE WORD OF CHRIST

A W Tozer wrote that...

faith rests not primarily upon promises, but upon character. A believer's faith can never rise higher than his conception of God. A promise is never better or worse than the character of the one who makes it. An inadequate conception of God must result in a weak faith, for faith depends upon the character of God just as a building rests upon its foundation...

Job told us, "Acquaint thyself with him and be at peace"; and Paul said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." These two verses show the way to a strong and lasting faith: Get acquainted with God through reading the Scriptures, and faith will come naturally...

Study the Scriptures and you will find that we are not going to have more faith by counting the promises of God. Faith does not rest upon promises. Faith rests upon character. Faith must rest in confidence upon the One who makes the promises...

If our faith is to have a firm foundation we must be convinced beyond any possible doubt that God is altogether worthy of our trust... (Ibid)

The word - As discussed below **rhema** refers not just to words that are written, but which are proclaimed and spoken such that they can be audibly heard. One could paraphrase it "and hearing by the spoken word of Christ".

The word of Christ - The **NET Bible note** speaking to the meaning of the word **of** states that the "genitive could be understood as either subjective ("Christ does the speaking") or objective ("Christ is spoken about"), but the latter is more likely here." The Greek scholar **A T Robertson** agrees - "By the word about Christ" (objective genitive) which Alford says is the instrument or vehicle of the gospel message."

The only other place in Scripture where the phrase **"Word of Christ"** is found is in Colossians 3:16. Notice that the results of letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly parallel the results of being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18-31. **See the discussion of this important spiritual dynamic - FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT -- RICHLY INDWELT BY THE WORD**

I agree with **Constable** who writes that **"The word of Christ** could mean the word **from** Him, namely the message that He has sent us to proclaim (Ro 10:15). It could also refer to the message **concerning** Christ (Ro 10:9-note). **Both meanings could have been in Paul's mind**. In either case the gospel is in view. ([Romans 10 Expository Notes](#))

As mentioned elsewhere contrary to popular opinion in some circles the Gospel is not found in the stars. And as this passage clearly teaches, **hearing** requires the word of Christ (or God in KJV), the message of the Bible. General or natural revelation (such as the stars) is insufficient to save a soul!

Paul practiced what he wrote so to speak for he preeminently preached the **Word of Christ**...

For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach **Christ crucified**, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God** and the wisdom of God. (1Cor 1:22, 23, 24)

For I determined to know nothing among you except **Jesus Christ**, and **Him crucified**. (1Cor 2:2)

Word (4487) (**rhema** [word study] from verb **rheo** = to speak - to say, speak or utter definite words) refers to the spoken word, especially a word as uttered by a living voice. **Laleo** is another word translated speak but it refers only to uttering a sound whereas **rheo** refers to uttering a definite intelligible word. **Rhema** refers to any sound produced by the voice which has a definite meaning. It focuses upon the content of the communication. For example in Luke we read "And they understood none of these things, and this **saying** (rhema) was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said." (Luke 18:34)

In the plural **rhema** ("words"), means saying, speech or discourse.

Rhema is used to refer to "the thing spoken of", an object, a matter, an affair or an event. For example we read in **Luke 1:65**

And fear came on all those living around them; and all these **matters** [rhema] were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

(Compare to) But Mary treasured up all these **things** (rhema), pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)

In **Jeremiah** God testifies to the power of His Word...

"The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?" declares the LORD. Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?" (Jeremiah 23:28,29)

The **writer of Hebrews** in the context of warning to all who have heard the gospel to enter the "rest" God provides writes these famous words...

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:12,13-note)

The KJV (a different Greek manuscript, the Textus Receptus) has "**word of God**" but the preferred rendering is "**word of Christ**" or "the message about Christ" which in its essence is the gospel (Mt 28:19, 20 Acts 20:21). "By the word about Christ" (objective genitive). As the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit engenders faith in the gospel message in the hearts of those elected to salvation. And the thing heard (the gospel message), comes through the agency of the Word of Christ. So like Paul said "preach the word" not fanciful stories about the word (2Ti 4:2-note compare 1Pe 1:22, 23, 24, 25-note). The power is in the Word of Christ, the Word of God, the Word of grace (Acts 20:32), the Word of the Cross (1Cor 1:17, 18).

Newell summarizes this section...

The Greek term here for "word" is **rhema**, not **logos**. It literally is, "saying," "speech, " as in Jn 3:34; 14:10; Acts 11:14. **Faith**, indeed, however, does come from a **report**; and there must be a **message** and a **messenger, sent of God**; as we have seen. But Christ accompanies this preached word by His Almighty "voice" as we know from Jn 5:25:

The hour cometh, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.

It is a (supernatural) "quickened" word, that creates (life giving) living faith.

It is here that the missionary urge comes! Christ must, indeed, utter His creating word from Heaven to the dead soul, saying, **Live!** But in 2Co 5:18,19,20, we see that while

"God was, indeed, in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2Co 5:19a) He has "committed to us (Greek = literally placed in us) the word of reconciliation (katallage - word study)." (2 Co 5:19b)

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf

of Christ, **be reconciled** (katallasso in aorist imperative = Urgent charge! Don't delay... you may not have tomorrow!) to God." (2Co 5:20)

Faith, indeed, comes of **hearing**. Do not imagine men will be saved in any other way. Earnest, prayerful Cornelius is commanded (and that by an angel) to send for

"Simon whose surname is Peter, who shall speak t-o thee words by which thou shalt be saved" (Acts 11:14).

"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching (lit., the preached thing) Christ crucified to save them that believe" (1Co 1:21).

Note also that "**faith comes**." If you **hear**, with a willing heart, the good news, that Christ died for you; that He was buried; that He was raised from the dead: by truly "**hearing**" **faith** will "**come**" to you. You do not have to do a thing but **hear**!

So there is God's part - He gave, by the Spirit, the written Word.

And Christ's part - He speaks, quickening the Word.

And your part - "He that hath ears, hear."

[\(Romans 10 Commentary\)](#)

Steven Cole - THOSE WHO BELIEVE HEARD THE GOSPEL AND RESPONDED WITH FAITH BECAUSE GOD GRACIOUSLY OPENED THEIR EARS TO HEAR (Ro 10:17). Romans 10:17: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Some manuscripts read "God" instead of "Christ," but "Christ" is the better attested reading. This verse seems out of context here, but it is probably a brief summary of verses 14-16 before Paul moves on to focus on the Jews' unbelief.

"Hearing" is the same Greek word translated "report" in Ro 10:15, and could refer to the message heard. Or, it can refer to the act of hearing. It doesn't make much difference. Paul's point is that people can't believe something that they have never heard (Ro 10:14). The message that they must hear is the word of Christ, which is the gospel. So faith comes from hearing the gospel preached. But, as we all know, not all who hear the gospel preached respond in faith. The quote from Isaiah (Ro 10:16), plus the ministries of all the prophets, of Paul, and even of the Lord Jesus Himself, show that many hear the good news but reject it.

So what makes the difference? Why do some hear and believe, while others hear and reject the message and sometimes attack the messenger? In John 8:43 Jesus asked His hostile Jewish listeners, "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word." They heard the sound of Jesus' words, but they were incapable of hearing in the sense of understanding and obeying Jesus' words, because as He went on to say, they were of their father, the devil. Jesus explained (John 5:25), "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Or, as Acts 16:14 explains, as Paul spoke the gospel to the Jewish women who gathered by the river in Philippi, "the Lord opened [Lydia's] heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." That's the difference. Jesus speaks the life-giving word and the spiritually dead come to life. Paul speaks the gospel and the Lord opens hearts to respond. If people are saved, it is because of God's sovereign grace. If they are lost, it is because of the hardness of their disobedient hearts.

Conclusion - So what is your response to the greatest news in the world? That news is not that you have just won the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes! It is that God has sent the Savior to die for your sins. If you will believe in Him, He gives you eternal life as a free gift. If you receive that good news, you will praise God who opened your heart to the truth. If you reject the news, you have no one to blame but yourself. ([Why Some are Lost and Some are Saved Romans 10:16-21](#))

Dr. E. Meyers Harrison, veteran missionary and professor of missions, says that there are four reasons why the church must send out missionaries:

- (1) the command from above—"go ye into all the world" (Mark 16:15)
- (2) the cry from beneath—"send him to my father's house" (Luke 16:27)
- (3) the call from without—"come over and help us" (Acts 16:9)
- (4) the constraint from within—"the love of Christ constraineth us" (2Cor. 5:14)

Hearing alone does not bring salvation, but faith, trust or belief in the message heard does bring salvation. Salvation comes when the message of the gospel is preached, believed, and Jesus is confessed as Lord. This message must come from the Word of Christ.

J K Johnson tells the following story...

Many years ago in a Moscow theater, matinee idol Alexander Rostovzev was converted while playing the role of Jesus in a sacrilegious play entitled Christ in a Tuxedo. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and cry out,

"Give me my tuxedo and top hat!"

But as he read the words,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,"

He began to tremble. Instead of following the script, he kept reading from Matthew 5, ignoring the coughs, calls, and foot-stamping of his fellow actors. Finally, recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood in a Russian Orthodox church, he cried,

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" (Luke 23:42).

Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev had trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. (Why Christians Sin, Discovery House, 1992)

Romans 10:18 But I [say](#) (1SAAI), [surely](#) they have [never * heard](#) (3PAAI) , have they? [Indeed](#) they have; "THEIR [VOICE](#) HAS [GONE OUT](#) (3SAAI) INTO [ALL THE EARTH](#) AND THEIR [WORDS](#) TO THE [ENDS OF THE WORLD](#)." (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [alla lego](#), (1SAAI) [me ouk ekousan?](#) (3PAAI) [menounge](#), [Eis pasan ten gen](#) exelthen (3SAAI) [o phthoggos auton](#), [kai eis ta perata tes oikoumenes ta rhemata auton](#).

Amplified: But I ask, Have they not heard? Indeed they have; [for the Scripture says] Their voice [that of nature bearing God's message] has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the far bounds of the world. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ESV: 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." ([ESV](#))

ICB: But I ask: Didn't people hear the Good News? Yes, they heard--as the Scripture says: "Their message went out through all the world. It goes everywhere on earth." Psalm 19:4 ([ICB: Nelson](#))

NIV: But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." ([NIV - IBS](#))

NKJV: But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."

NLT: But what about the Jews? Have they actually heard the message? Yes, they have: "The message of God's creation has gone out to everyone, and its words to all the world." ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: But when I ask myself: "Did they never hear?" I have to answer that they have heard, for 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their word to the ends of the world'. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: But I say, did they not hear? Most certainly. Into all the earth their sound went out, and into the extremities of the inhabited earth, their words.

Young's Literal: but I say, Did they not hear? yes, indeed -- 'to all the earth their voice went forth, and to the ends of the habitable world their sayings.'

BUT I SAY, SURELY THEY HAVE NEVER HEARD, HAVE THEY? INDEED THEY HAVE? THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD: [alla lego](#), (1SAAI) [me ouk ekousan?](#) (3PAAI) [menounge](#), [Eis pasan ten gen](#) exelthen (3SAAI) [o phthoggos auton](#), [kai eis ta perata tes oikoumenes ta rhemata auton](#):

- Acts 2:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; 26:20; 28:23
- Romans 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

A RHETORICAL QUESTION

Romans 10:18-21 gives three results of Israel's rejection of the "word of Christ", and each result is supported by an OT quotation.

But I say - As Denney says with this phrase Paul "introduces a plea on their (Israel's) behalf".

Surely they have never heard - With this rhetorical question Paul anticipates an objection from some of his Jewish readers. This clause even uses the double negative (me ouk) which is the strongest way possible of conveying a negative response. In other words, the question is "Have they in **no way** heard (because we know that they have to hear in order to believe)?" to which Paul responds "No, they **have** heard!"

Voice (5353) (**phthoggos**) means a musical sound, vocal or instrumental and here Paul applies it to the human voice (quoting the Greek translation of Ps 19:4).

Into all the earth - This phrase appears first in the sentence to emphasize the universal accessibility of general revelation. Creation gives worldwide, ample witness of the Creator so that it is little wonder that those who desire to suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Ro 1:18-note) advocate natural evolution and abhor supernatural creation!

F F Bruce comments that "This might seem an exaggeration: the gospel had not been carried throughout all the earth, not even to all the lands that were known to the inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world. Paul was well aware of that; at this very time he was planning the evangelization of Spain, a province where the name of Christ was not yet known (cp Ro 15:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24-note). But by now the gospel had been carried to most parts of the Mediterranean area where Jews were to be found; and that is all the argument requires."

Adam Clarke - There is not a part of the promised land in which these glad tidings have not been preached; and there is scarcely a place in the Roman empire in which the doctrine of Christ crucified has not been heard: if, therefore, the Jews have not believed, the fault is entirely their own; as God has amply furnished them with the means of faith of salvation.

You've probably heard the argument "what about all those who have never heard." Paul has already explained that there are **none** "who have never heard". In Romans 1 he wrote...

that which is known about God is **evident within them (don't miss this truth - it describes the primitive tribesman as well as the intellectual agnostic!)**; for God made it evident to them (**God is not unfair!**). For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen**, being understood through what has been made (**Creation testifying to the assurance that their is a Creator**), so that (**conclusion**) **they are without excuse**. (Ro 1:19, 20- **notes** Ro 1:19, 20)

NO EXCUSE!

So the point of Romans 1 is that the pagans had heard about God but they willfully rejected the light they had and God gave them over to their sin (Study Ro 1:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 -See **notes** Romans 1:21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31; 32)

Someone might still argue with Paul agreeing that Romans 1 takes care of the pagans but what about the Jews -- "How do you know that Israel really heard?" So here in Romans 10:18, Paul answers by appealing to the Word of God, specifically quoting from a psalm of David...

Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun (Psalms 19:4)

Spurgeon commenting on Psalm 19:4 writes...

Although the heavenly bodies move in solemn silence, yet in reason's ear they utter precious teachings. They give forth no literal words, but yet their instruction is clear enough to be so described. Horne says that the phrase employed indicates a language of signs, and thus we are told that the heavens speak by their significant actions and operations. Nature's words are like those of the deaf and dumb, but grace tells us plainly of the Father.

By their line is probably meant the measure of their domain which, together with their testimony, has gone out to the utmost end of the habitable earth. No man living beneath the copes of heaven dwells beyond the bounds of the diocese of God's Court preachers; it is easy to escape from the light of ministers, who are as stars in the

right hand of the Son of Man; but even then men, with a conscience not yet seared, will find a Nathan to accuse them, a Jonah to warn them, and an Elijah to threaten them in the silent stars of night. To gracious souls the voices of the heavens are more influential far, they feel the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and are drawn towards their Father God by the bright bands of Orion.

Psalms 19 is the OT counterpart of Romans 1:19ff and likewise emphasizes the **revelation** of God in Nature or Creation (So-called "Natural Revelation" -- see a nice summary of the [Revelation of God](#)). Read David's great Psalm and observe how God reveals Himself first in creation (Ps 19:1-6) and then in His Word (Psalm 19:7-11)...

Psalm 19:1-6

General Revelation:

The Witness of Creation

1 The heavens are **telling** of the glory of God (The Name El = the strong One - used in vv 1-6); And their expanse is **declaring** the work of His hands. ([SN = Spurgeon's notes on each verse of this Psalm](#))

2 Day to day pours forth **speech**, And night to night **reveals knowledge**. ([SN](#))

3 There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. ([SN](#)) (Kidner calls this "the paradox of wordless speech")

4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, ([SN](#))

5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber (pictures the glory); It rejoices as a strong man to run his course (pictures the power). ([SN](#))

6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. ([SN](#)) (Pictures the universality of the non-verbal testimony of God the Creator - can you see why the assault on creation by evolutionists is a frontal assault on God Himself and how evolution is ultimately a spiritual issue intended by the Adversary to blunt the clear witness of Jehovah God!)

Psalm 19:7-11

Special Revelation:

The Law of Moses

7 The **law** of the LORD (Name now switches to Yahweh or Jehovah stressing His covenant relationship to Israel. Thus El = Jehovah, Israel's God, and not some pagan "sun god"!) is perfect, restoring the soul;

The **testimony** of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ([SN](#))

8 The **precepts** of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The **commandment** of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ([SN](#))

9 The **fear** of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

The **judgments** of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. ([SN](#))

10 **They** are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. ([SN](#))

11 Moreover, **by them** Thy servant is warned;

In keeping **them** there is great reward. ([SN](#))

Psalm 19:12-14

Revelation Stimulates

Fervent, Specific Prayer

12 Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults (exposed by the light of God's Word). ([SN](#))

13 Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. ([SN](#))

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. ([SN](#))

Who was the recipient of Psalm 19? Israel of course and so in contrast to the pagans who saw ("heard") only the **natural revelation in Creation**, the nation of Israel had the benefit of two "books", for she saw God at work in nature (Ro 1:19, 20-note) and she also received God's written Word ("they were entrusted with the oracles of God" Ro 3:2-note). Israel **heard**, but she refused to **heed**. Little wonder that Jesus so often declared to the crowds "He that has ears to hear, let him hear!" (cp Mt 11:15, Mk 4:9, 4:23, 7:16, Lk 8:8, 14:35)

In summary, all men, both Gentiles and Jews, are **"without excuse,"** (Ro 1:20-note and Ro 2:1-note) for The Creator provided a clear and complete witness in the creation of His existence and even given Israel the double witness of Creation and His Law.

Spurgeon put it this way...

In God's works we see His hand, but in His Word His face. (**Ed**: Israel missed His hand and His face!)

Paul's point in this verse is to emphasize that Israel had ample opportunity from **natural** and **special revelation** to respond to the truth about God and was responsible to respond to these clear witnesses God had provided to the people of Israel. It is worth noting that as Paul emphasizes, most of the Jews rejected the truth about God, but there was always a **believing remnant**.

G Campbell Morgan's words aptly apply to Israel's rejection "Unbelief is not failure in intellectual apprehension. It is disobedience in the presence of the clear commands of God."

ROLE OF NATURAL REVELATION

As an aside, it is important to note what Paul is **not** saying. Paul is not saying in this section that the Gospel was present in the stars or in the Creation (you may have heard this taught but it is absolutely incorrect). **Natural revelation** points people to God but natural revelation is insufficient to save. If men reject God's **natural revelation**, they are lost. If they respond to **natural revelation**, God will somehow get them the special revelation of the Gospel.

William Guthrie wrote that "God excludes none if they do not exclude themselves."

If you are skeptical of the role and the **"power"** of God's **natural revelation** to kindle in a good heart (Lk 8:15) a response that seeks for God (Isa 55:6), there is a fascinating book entitled [Eternity in their Hearts](#), which you must consider reading, for in it the author **Don Richardson** gives concrete examples of the effect of **natural revelation** on primitive people groups. Here is a snippet from the back cover of this fascinating book that should stimulate you to want to read the incredible supernatural saga of how unreached people group after unreached people group were stirred by God's **Creation**, or **Natural Revelation** to know the **Creator**, the true and living God...

The year is 1795, and deep in the jungles of Burma hundreds of native tribesmen rush out to a clearing to greet a white-skinned stranger. Could he be the one to bring the book their forefathers lost so many centuries ago -- the book that tells the secrets of Y'Wa, the Supreme God? Yes! **And later missionaries were astounded at the way in which God had prepared these people for one of the greatest mass conversions in history!**

The photograph on the cover of this book portrays the ruins of Machu Picchu, a majestic fortress in Peru built in the fifteenth century. Anyone who has been awed by its splendor will want to read how Pachacuti, the Inca king who founded it, accomplished something far more significant than merely building fortresses, temples or monuments. His story is yet another example of how the concept of a supreme God has existed for centuries in hundreds of cultures throughout the world.

These and twenty-five other incredible-but-true stories prove the truth of the words in Ecclesiastes: "He (God) has also set eternity in the hearts of men." (Richardson, Don: [Eternity in their Hearts](#) - **Highly Recommended**)

And so a universal proclamation that has gone forth, and if it is observed ("heard"), and if it is noticed and followed, God will give more light. All men everywhere are responsible to seek the God Who is revealed in nature and in the heavens. Now, they may have no more light than that. But, if they, are obedient to it, God is responsible to send someone to speak the gospel to them so that they might be saved. Those who refuse to trust in God do so, not because they are ignorant but because they willfully, deliberately, actively, continually (present tense) **suppress** (hold down, quash) **the truth in unrighteousness** (Ro 1:18-note).

Os Guinness rightly comments that such blatant, bold-faced...

Unbelief in the biblical view is not passive, an innocent but inaccurate view of the world that has unfortunately 'got it wrong' at a few points. Rather, unbelief is active, driven by a dark dynamism (**Ed**: Called **Sin** and **flesh**)

As **Calvin** put it...

Unbelieving and irreligious men have no ears.

Puritan writer **Stephen Charnock** asked...

Is not he as much guilty of his own death that rejects a medicine as he that cuts his own throat?

Tozer puts it this way...

Unbelief says: Some other time, but not now; some other place, but not here; some other people, but not us.

Horatius Bonar said that...

In all unbelief there are these two things: a good opinion of one's self and a bad opinion of God.

Henry Drummond has an interesting quote writing that...

Christ distinguished between doubt and unbelief. Doubt says, 'I can't believe.' Unbelief says, 'I won't believe.'
Doubt is honest. Unbelief is obstinate.

I like **Spurgeon's** statement that...

Unbelief will destroy the best of us. Faith will save the worst of us.

A W Tozer said that...

The cause of unbelief in the heart is always sin in the life. Let the seeker deal with his sin radically, and he is not likely thereafter to experience much difficulty in believing. For believing is not an act of the intellect. It is an act of the will. It is a moral thing, not a mental one.

So what is the answer to one of the most frequent arguments by skeptics of "What about those who have never heard about God?" As plainly as it can be stated the answer is that "There aren't any people who have never heard about God."

Their words to the ends of the world - This declaration again emphasizes the universal scope of natural (general) revelation. The "spoken words" (**rhema**) penetrated into (eis) the **ends** (**peras** from **pera** = beyond - the farthest end of a space, the limit or boundary) of the inhabited world. **Natural revelation** "speaks" a clear message to intelligent creatures (mankind).

World ([3635](#)) (**oikoumene** the feminine participle present passive of **oikeo** = to dwell or abide) describes the inhabited portion of the earth, exclusive of the heavens above and hell below. The Romans used **oikoumene** in their secular writings to refer to the Roman Empire, for to them their empire equated with the whole world. Finally, in some NT contexts **oikoumene** was used to refer to the inhabitants of the world (see below Acts 17:31, 19:27, Re 12:9 - [note](#))

Oikoumene is used 40 times in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX)

2 Sam. 22:16; Est. 3:13; Ps. 9:8; 18:15; 19:4; 24:1; 33:8; 49:1; 50:12; 72:8; 77:18; 89:11; 90:2; 93:1; 96:10, 13; 97:4; 98:7, 9; Prov. 8:31; Isa. 10:14, 23; 13:5, 9, 11; 14:17, 26; 23:17; 24:1, 4; 27:6; 34:1; 37:16, 18; 62:4; Jer. 10:12; 51:15; Lam. 4:12; Dan. 2:38; 3:2). Here are some representative uses (note the preponderance of uses in the Psalms)...

Psalm 9:8 And He will judge the **world** (Hebrew = *tebel* = inhabited world; Lxx = *oikoumene*) in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.

Psalm 19:4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the **world** (Hebrew = *tebel* = inhabited world; Lxx = *oikoumene*). In them He has placed a tent for the sun

Psalm 96:13 Before the LORD, for He is coming; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the **world** (Hebrew = *tebel* = inhabited world; Lxx = *oikoumene*) in righteousness, And the peoples in His faithfulness.

Here are the 15 NT uses of **oikoumene**...

Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole **world** for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

Luke 2:1 Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the **inhabited earth**.

Luke 4:5 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the **world** in a moment of time.

Luke 21:26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the **world**; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Acts 11:28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the **world**. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

Acts 17:6 And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the **world** have come here also;

Acts 17:31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the **world** in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 19:27 "And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the **world** worship should even be dethroned from her magnificence."

Acts 24:5 "For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the **world**, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Romans 10:18 (note) But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the **world**."

Hebrews 1:6 (note) And when He again brings the first-born into the **world**, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

Hebrews 2:5 (note) For He did not subject to angels the **world** to come, concerning which we are speaking.

[**Revelation 3:10** \(note\)](#) 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole **world**, to test those who dwell upon the earth.

[**Revelation 12:9** \(note\)](#) And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole **world**; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

[**Revelation 16:14** \(note\)](#) for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole **world**, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

The True Light

Christ, whose glory fills the skies
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of righteousness, arise,
Triumph o'er the shades of night;

Dayspring from on high, be near,
Daystar, in my heart appear.
Dark and cheerless is the morn,
Unaccompanied by Thee;
Joyless is the day's return
Till Thy mercy's beams I see;

Till Thy inward life impart,
Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine;
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
Fill me, Radiance Divine,
Scatter all my unbelief;
More and more Thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day.

—Charles Wesley

110:17 for a moment, where Paul twice mentions “hearing,” he goes on to respond to a hypothetical objection (that stems from Ro 10:14,17) that perhaps Israel has not heard. Romans 10:18 says, “But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; ‘Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.’” Paul cites Psalm 19:4 to show that the Jews have heard the good news.

But this raises two problems. Psalm 19:1-6 extols God’s glory through creation (natural revelation), whereas 19:7-11 goes on to extol God’s Word (special revelation). The first problem is: How does a verse about God’s revelation through creation demonstrate that Israel has heard the gospel, since creation doesn’t proclaim the gospel? Is Paul using that text out of context to prove what it does not say? Most commentators explain this by saying that Paul is using an analogy. Just as God’s natural revelation proclaims His glory to all the earth, so now the gospel has been proclaimed over all the earth, especially with reference to the Jews (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans], pp. 665-666).

I agree, but I would go a bit further and suggest that Paul may have used this verse on natural revelation to say that if people ignore God’s general revelation of His glory through His creation, then they will be prone to ignore His special revelation through the preaching of the gospel. (We saw this in Romans 1:18-23.)

To apply this to our times, if people deny God by believing the myth of evolution, they are not going to be inclined to submit to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Evolution is the most preposterous myth ever foisted on the human race. Otherwise intelligent people latch onto it because it gives them a supposed escape from the uncomfortable truth that hits you between the eyes in the first verse of the Bible (Gen. 1:1), “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” If that verse is true—and the Bible doesn’t put it out there as a theory to be debated or discussed—then God is God and you are not God! It means that you had better get reconciled to this Almighty Creator before you meet Him in judgment!

But, if Paul is using Psalm 19 as an analogy, to say that just as the creation universally proclaims God’s glory, so the gospel has now been universally proclaimed, then there is a second problem: How does this text establish that all the Jews have heard the gospel? Surely there were many Jews who had not yet heard about Christ. Even Paul knew that not everyone had heard, or he wouldn’t be trying to go to Spain to proclaim the gospel there (Rom. 15:24, 28).

Probably Paul was speaking generally and with some hyperbole. In other words, the gospel has been proclaimed sufficiently among even the Gentile world to such an extent that almost all of the Jews have heard the message. (Paul uses the same kind of generalization and hyperbole in Colossians 1:6, 23.) It would be the same as if I said that everyone who speaks English has heard the gospel. Conceivably, there may be some English speakers who have not heard, but it would be their own fault. The gospel has been so widely proclaimed in English through so many different media for such a long time that any English speakers who have not heard must be deliberately avoiding it.

So Paul is saying that the problem with the Jews’ widespread rejection of the gospel was not that they had not heard the message. The problem was that they had rejected the message because they loved their own sin. Like the Gentiles, they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness (Ro 1:18). Their pride caused them to try to establish their own righteousness, rather than to subject themselves to God’s righteousness (Ro 11:3).

When you share the gospel, you often will hear the objection, “But what about people who have never heard? Will God judge the person who lived 500 years ago in Afghanistan, who lived and died without hearing about Jesus?” The way to respond is to ask, “If I can resolve that difficulty, are you saying that you would repent of your sins and believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord?” Almost certainly the person will answer, “Well, there are a lot of other questions, too!” In other words, this is just a smokescreen so that he can dodge the issue of his own sin before the holy God. You can press him by saying, “Well, you have heard the gospel and God will hold you accountable for the light that you have received.” And that applies to you! You have heard the gospel. Have you responded with obedient faith? ([Why Some are Lost and Some are Saved Romans 10:16-21](#))