

Romans (10:19-21)

Choose to be Chosen

Part 49 – October 2, 2005

DID THEY NOT HEAR?

Paul is examining why Israel rejected the message of the Gospel; either:

1. They didn't really hear it.
2. They haven't understood it.
3. They refused to receive it.

To prove that they heard it, Paul took them back 700 years to Isaiah 53 (the Gospel of the Old Testament), where the renowned prophet said:

“Lord, who has believed our message?” - *Romans 10:16 NIV*

- A. The “**who**” are the Gentiles who'll witness the Savior.
- B. The “**our**” refers to Israel who possesses the message.
- C. The “**message**” is that of a *suffering* Messiah to come.



Among Isaiah's insights about the Savior, he foretold that:



- He'd be despised, rejected, oppressed, and afflicted.
- He'd be “pierced” for the transgressions of the Jews.
- He'd die with the wicked as the final guilt offering.
- He'd pour out his life while bearing the sin of many.



Paul's point was that not only did Israel *hear* it (in Isaiah) they *saw* it (in Jesus). And the tragic irony was they refused to receive their *own* message.

And so, we left off (in verse 18) with Paul asking: “Did they not hear it?” And then answering: “Of course they did.” Now having shown they heard, today Paul asks if they understood:

Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” - *Romans 10:19-21 NIV*

JEALOUS?

Paul lifts this first quote from a song Moses sung to the people of Israel (*Deut. 32:21*) when they had turned to worthless idols:

First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."

God is saying: Make me jealous by that which is not a God, and I'll make you jealous by that which is not a Jew.

There are two points that need to be made:

1. God doesn't make the Jews Jealous to harm them.

Q: You ever try to make someone jealous to get back at them?

That isn't what Moses is talking about. This is about redemption not retribution. God wants them to realize what they've lost.

- God works to rekindle our desire when we forsake Him.

He will use any and all means necessary to secure your soul.

2. God doesn't save the Gentiles to spite the Jews.

On the contrary; he chose the Jews in order to send them out as missionaries and ambassadors to the Gentile nations.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. - *Isaiah 56:7 NIV*

Isaiah 56 is all about non-Jews choosing what pleases God and by so doing becoming part of his chosen people. This has incredible significance for those who wrestle with the whole Calvinist/Arminian debate about God's sovereignty and man's free will. (Does God choose us or do we choose Him?) God chooses his people by his criteria; and His first and foremost criterion is that they choose to surrender to his supremacy.

- According to Isaiah 56: We can choose to be chosen.

But Paul's point in quoting Moses is to demonstrate that envy, Jealousy, and anger would betray Israel's actual understanding.

Q: Why were they never jealous of pagans worshipping idols?

A: Because they knew that it was pointless and ineffectual.

Q: So, were they angry and envious that God was allowing unworthy Gentiles to choose to receive him as their eternal father?

Well, they always seemed to be muttering about Jesus hanging out with tax collectors and “sinners” (*Luke 15:1-2*).

In fact, one time their anger and envy were so obvious that Jesus wove it into a well-known parable: The Prodigal Son.



There are two sons. The younger one demands his inheritance, goes to the big city, and squanders it on wild living. Penniless, homeless, and foodless, he returns to ask his father’s forgiveness and to ask if he can hire on as one an employee.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.” - *Luke 15:20 NIV*

Now, the older son comes in from the field and hears some kind of celebration going on inside the house.

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, “Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!” “My son,” the father said, “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” - *Luke 15:25-32 NIV*

And the parable ends. I can imagine the crowd around Jesus saying, “So what’d the older one do?!” And Jesus looking up at the Pharisees and saying, “We’ll have to wait and see.”

When Paul was speaking to a crowd of Jewish leaders in Jerusalem they listened to everything he had to say ... until he said this:

Then the Lord said to me, “Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.” The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!” - *Acts 22:21-22 NIV*

- The more jealous the Jews became, the more they should have recognized the alarm sounded by Moses.

Paul now says that, of all people you should know that you can't corner the message or the market on God. Because you know a "little secret" first hand:

And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."

The universal truth for us here is that:

- God pursued you long before you pursued Him.

This quote can be mistakenly applied to non-Jews. But Isaiah's context is clear, as is Isaiah's very next sentence:

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, "Here am I, here am I." - *Isaiah 65:1 NIV*

- Isaiah is talking to the Jews, not the Gentiles!

The Jews were the ones who found, and were chosen, by a God they were not seeking. And they've become possessive of their position. Paul is saying, "Your temper tantrum has given you away - you *do* understand that God is embracing prodigal people who don't deserve his grace, and you don't like it, and won't accept it!

So now, having shown that they heard and that they understood Paul leaves them with his conclusion (which is a continuation of the quote from Isaiah 65:2) they refuse to receive.

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

Through Christ, God revealed himself to those who didn't ask for him; and on the cross he held out his hands all day long for disobedient and obstinate people.

The Calvinists don't like this verse because it portrays God as offering something that man must make a decision to receive. The Arminians don't like verse 20, because it makes it sound like God just reveals himself no matter what we do.

But here's a perspective that makes them compatible:

- *God* must do the revealing and *we must* do the receiving

God wants us to pursue him with all of our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength ... because that's the way he pursues us!