

**Rom 10:18 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."19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by [those who are] not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."**

Paul's focus has been on the fact that the Jews have been, in large part, excluded from salvation. The question must be answered- why? So Paul finishes his answer to that question in verses 18-21. And true to Paul's method, he uses the Old Testament to support everything he says.

We start, right off the bat, with an **example to follow**. Here is Paul, an apostle of Christ. If anyone held authority in the church this man did. But how does he lead? How does he counsel? How does he exert his authority? He rests it firmly in the pages of scripture. Paul doesn't play the "I am in authority so shut up and do what I say" card. No, his desire is to **convince** his audience. So he appeals to the authority that is rock solid. The word of God. His greatest concern is for the **good** of his listeners, not the **ease** of his job.

We also see that Paul **knew** his scriptures. He couldn't look up his verses like we can. He had no "search" function on his laptop. He had to let his fingers do the walking when he wanted to look up a passage. But here he is, filling in each gap with a scripture from the Old Testament so that his audience would be left with no legitimate doubts as to the **authenticity** of his message. We too, would do well in our expressions of authority, to use scripture as our **basis** for our authority. It requires more work and more thought, but that may not be all bad. It will keep our words limited until we are sure of our positions. And when we quote scripture accurately as our basis for what we are doing, we can rest confidently that we are doing the **right** thing.

Now let's jump into our text.

The question is, **why did the Jews reject the salvation of God?**

We will find that verses 18 and 19 reject two excuses and 19 and 20 state the true problem.

Verse 18 rejects the idea that **the Jews have not heard**.

Verse 19 refutes the idea that **the Jews did not understand**

Verse 19 and 20 **attribute** their rejection to issues of the heart. The Jews, as a whole, were disobedient and contrary. These four verses will be the focus of our study this morning.

**Rom 10:18 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."**

Now, if the reason the Jews have not responded to the gospel is because they have not **heard** the gospel, you could have some compassion. But Paul says that the Jews do not have such an excuse. And he quotes Psalms 19:3. Let's look at verses 1-5.

**1 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.**

**2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.**

**[There is] no speech nor language [Where] their voice is not heard.**

**3 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,**

**4 Which [is] like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, [And] rejoices like a strong man to run its race.**

**5 Its rising [is] from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.**

We see that Psalms 19 is primarily addressing creation. And every human can see from creation **the reality of God's existence** and a **little bit** about His character. Remember when we started our study of Romans how Paul makes the point that the creation makes a man accountable.

Romans 1:18-23

**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown [it] to them.**

**For since the creation of the world His invisible [attributes] are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify [Him] as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

**Professing to be wise, they became fools,  
and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like  
corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.**

So we can see that there is a certain accountability gained just from knowing about creation. But somehow I believe the verse in our text this morning is intended to convey **more** to his audience. It is clear that Paul is talking about the Gospel. That is **his** context. And I think that he is quoting this verse to convey that **,just as** the awareness of creation holds people universally accountable, **so does** the fact that the Gospel was known to Jews in most every area of the map by this time in history. It is clear that Paul is saying that the problem is not that the Jews did not **hear** the gospel.

I don't think that this verse is attempting to say that every Jewish individual **has heard** the gospel by this point in history. But he is emphasizing that the general problem of the rejection of the Gospel is **not due to them not hearing it**. The majority of them heard it presented very clearly. In Acts 26:26 Paul told Agrippa that the information he was giving to King Agrippa probably was not new to the king. It is not like everything that happened with Christ and with the Apostles "happened in a corner". That's the phrase Paul uses. Paul was essentially saying that it was common knowledge. The Jews commonly knew about it. The gospel was, for most intents and purposes, common knowledge in the Jewish sector. So the problem was not that they did not **hear**.

Remember that Paul is addressing the global rejection by the Jews of the gospel. He is giving the reasons for why the Jews, as a whole, have rejected the gospel message. He is not saying that there are no individual Jews who have not yet heard the gospel. He is not saying that there are not more Jews who, upon **hearing** the gospel, won't respond to it as glad tidings. He is explaining a generality. We need to keep that in perspective.

In **general** the Jews have rejected the gospel, they have not responded positively to the gospel, and it is not because they have not heard the gospel. That is the point he is making.

Now, if they have heard the gospel, a person has to ask next, did they **understand** the gospel? Because if they did not **understand** the gospel, we again could feel some compassion for them. We might think God was unjust in His dealings with them.

After all, many of the people we rub shoulders with have either **never heard** the gospel or **never understood** it. And we should have compassion for those people.

We should, like Paul, make it a point to do everything we can to make that gospel understood to those folks.

So Paul makes it clear in verse 19 that **not understanding** the gospel was not the problem either.

**19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by [those who are] not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."**

Here Paul quoted Moses. These were the words of Moses, the patriarch whom the Jews held so near and dear. And what did he have to say?

It is important to understand that the word **for foolish** here means **uninstructed**. So you have a contrast of those who were a nation- **the instructed ones**. And those who were not a nation- **the uninstructed ones**. And who are the ones needing provoked to jealousy? The **instructed ones**. They are the ones who **understood the message**. The problem was not that they did not understand. It was something other than that. In fact, it is **the instructed** ones that God is clearly upset with.

Let's look at the context this verse comes from that Paul is quoting here.

**Deu 32:15-23 NKJV - "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese! Then he forsook God [who] made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him (God) to jealousy with foreign [gods]; With abominations they provoked Him (God) to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, [To gods] they did not know, To new [gods], new arrivals That your fathers did not fear. Of the Rock [who] begot you, you are unmindful, And have forgotten the God who fathered you. "And when the LORD saw [it], He spurned [them], Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said: 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end [will be], For they [are] a perverse generation, Children in whom [is] no faith. They have provoked Me to jealousy by [what] is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by [those who are] not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in My anger, And shall burn to the lowest hell; It shall consume the earth with her increase, And set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 'I will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them.**

Look at what is happening here. We see that the **Israelites** have provoked **God's** jealousy. They have **angered** Him by their actions. And God has **had enough**. That is where our text comes in. Now God is going to provoke **the Israelites** to jealousy. God is going to show his attention to **a foreign** people. He is going to lavish his favor on outsiders. And the Israelites will be brought to realize the value of that which they squandered, that which they spurned. Their loving husband has left them due to their unfaithfulness and taken up residence with another love.

On a cursory reading of our Romans text we could easily miss something important. The texts that Paul chooses are not texts of **correction**. They are texts of **severe judgment**. Paul is choosing passages from the Old Testament where the biblical heroes, Moses and Isaiah foretell God's **judgment** on the nation of Israel. They are texts where God has **had enough of their rebellion** against Him and He is **moving** against them.

We as humans have an uncanny ability to **overlook our own flaws** and assume ourselves to be far better than what we really are. What Paul is doing here is essentially applying judgment passages to his contemporary countrymen. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, and the general populace **did not see themselves** as standing under God's wrath. They did not see **themselves** as being rebellious or headstrong. But they were facing God's judgment, none-the-less. I think there is a lesson for us in this example this morning. We must have the courage and honesty to ask ourselves, "how are **we** like these Jews?" We must always bring ourselves prayerfully into God's presence asking Him to show us what we are doing that is displeasing to Him. We cannot assume, like Paul's countrymen, that **we are fine** just as we are. We cannot assume that we are such good people that **we** would never choose a pattern of rebellion or self-serving. If we choose to allow ourselves to live under the assumption that all our actions are right and pleasing to God, we are living very dangerously. Believers must live examined lives. And the word of God is always the standard. We cannot allow ourselves to **smugly assume** that our actions are correct. We must test them continually against the word of God and the life of Christ and his disciples. Do we **care about** what God cares about? Do we **love** like He loves? Are our lives absorbed with the things **He says** are important? Are our lives filled with **joy and gratitude** for the good He brings us each day? Is there **any known sin** that we are secretly committed to? These are the questions we must ask.

And when we face relational difficulties, this is often the field that God uses to show us ourselves. He flushes our sin out into the open. How do we **react** when

people address our words or behaviors. Are we quick to respond with the assumption that **their** response or **their** concern is **their** problem? Do we immediately think- why are they attacking me? Do we hunt for evil motives they might have in saying what they are saying **instead of** considering that they might love us and what they might be saying might be the truth about us? Do we analyze what **we** did that may have created that response that we are seeing? Do we do the time consuming work of considering what is motivating our words and our actions? When a person is asked why they did a thing, if they immediately shoot back a response it is often not true. It takes a while to really know why we do just about anything. If a person doesn't pause to think, I have very little confidence that the answer I am getting is the truth. It is more likely to be a theory than the truth.

If we immediately **violently** respond when we are challenged, we need to carefully look at that. We are probably defending territory that we should **not be** defending. Our reaction is probably designed to get people off the trail. We make them **pay so much for dealing with us** that they will probably stop. If we see that in our lives, we need to beware. It is probably home to dishonesty. And it is probably protecting sin.

The devil absolutely loves it when we assume we are right. He has used that attitude to lull people to sleep over the centuries. He knows that there is no better way to destroy a person than to have them assume they are ok. That is exactly the state of mind **the Jews were in** at the time of Paul. And unfortunately that is the state of mind a lot of people are in who call themselves Christians today. Are we in that state?

Again, Paul's point here is that the problem with the Jews was **not** that they did not hear. The problem with the Jews was **not** that they did not understand. So what is the problem?

**20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."**

Notice what God is doing here. Let's look at the original

**Isaiah 65:1,2 1 "I was sought by [those who] did not ask [for Me]; I was found by [those who] did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' To a nation [that] was not called by My name.**

**2 I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way [that is] not good, According to their own thoughts;**

Like the Duet text, the context of the Isaiah passage is not one of **restoration**. It is one of **judgment**. The ones who are **rejecting** God are about to be **rejected** by God. The sword would arrive to remove them.

So the **provoking** and **angering** that God is doing is **not** a nurturing gesture in Isaiah. It is **not** a wooing them back into relationship with God. It is a punishment. And the ones being provoked and angered, the instructed ones, were being scheduled for judgment.

Notice it says Isaiah was very bold in saying this. What he was saying was not positive and popular. The scholars would **mock him** by pulling out their theological constructs that showed that **God was loving** and **Israel was chosen**. But the theologians ignored much of what scripture also said about faith and obedience. They were confident, but their confidence was based on lies, not truth. For Isaiah to say this was **hard** and **bold** and **confrontational**. It would not have been received well at all by most people.

Look at the picture this creates.

This is what God is doing that creates jealousy and anger in the Jewish people. God is actively reaching out to those who were previously ignored. We see that this was active on God's part. It isn't that these Gentiles were just stumbling over God. No. No one ever does that. They are being drawn.

**"I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."**

The more you understand Romans the more you see that it is **all about God**. Salvation is all about God. Were the gentiles coming to Christ because they had sought for God so long and hard and they finally had a breakthrough? No. It isn't like that at all. The Gentiles weren't even seeking the true God. Sure, some of them were seeking spiritual things. But not the **one true God**.

But those are **exactly** the ones that God is found by. Now ask yourself, how could that happen? And we know, because we have studied the rest of the book. It is because they were **irresistibly drawn to God by the Holy Spirit**.

Look at the second sentence.

**I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."**

What does it mean to be made manifest? This same Greek word is used in this passage: **Acts 10:40 (NKJV)**

**40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,**

The word means to show something openly. God has done this in many ways. He has shown his grace and mercy to the gentiles, first by displaying Christ's life, death and resurrection to the Disciples and those surrounding Christ. Then he

sent messengers all over the Greek world preaching the gospel. And thirdly by confirming the message with the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts of the hearers. And **who** did God do this to? Were they the **supreme seekers**? No. Not at all. They were in a sense **unsuspecting victims**. They were just living their lives and **this happened to them**. God performed this miracle in person after person in small towns and big cities. And there was no explanation for it except for the grace of God.

**21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."**

Now think about this a little. How should people in sin respond to God? Shouldn't they have their arms out to God appealing for his mercy on their behalf. Shouldn't they be the repentant ones, the supplicant ones? Shouldn't they be the ones like the prophets in the Old Testament, who would fall to the ground in God's presence?

But what picture does the prophet give us here? Look! It is just the opposite. The Jews are going merrily along their paths of rebellion. They are committed to doing their own thing. They will not be interrupted in their lives of sin. And what is God doing? It is **God** who has hands stretched out. It is **God** who is appealing for the affection of these hard hearted people. It is **God** who is longing to rescue them from the judgment they are soon to face. It is **God** who is lowering Himself due to His great love and compassion. He has every right to stand idly by and pour out His wrath that they so richly deserve. But He does not do so at first. He gives an appeal from the heart of love for a people that have rejected Him.

And it wasn't just a fleeting gesture. It was a committed act. He has been doing it all day long. Even though there was no response, he kept doing it. Even though people would think that **God was weak**, that **God really didn't have the heart to punish them**, that **they were sitting in the cat bird's seat because of God's love** for them. God just kept appealing to them to repent and to return to Him.

But when we read the history we know that, as a whole, they did not respond to God's appeal. They just continued on in their way. And why was **that**?

Did they not **hear** the appeal? Oh no, they heard it alright.

Did they not **understand** the appeal? Oh no, they understood it alright.

The problem is they had **heart trouble**.

They were a **disobedient and contrary people**

What does that mean?

Disobedient- This means **non-persuade-able**. They would not allow themselves to be persuaded by the truth. They had a prejudice of the heart. A prejudice is arriving at a verdict no matter what the facts are. Something is **the way we think it** is no matter what the facts say. Well that is what these Jews displayed. They had everything figured out and they knew how it was. It didn't matter what the facts said. It didn't matter what God would say. They would not be changed from their course.

When Galileo was brought before the Roman Catholic rulers for his teaching that the Sun was not revolving around the earth but the earth was revolving around the sun they accused him of heresy. He told them, look through my telescope and I will show you what I mean. They would not look. They would not even consider this truth that was readily observable. That is prejudice. That is the disobedience described here.

Very clearly this is an error to avoid. This is something that we cannot allow in **ourselves**. How much of our lives display this very thing? Where do **we** know better than God? We know what **He** says. We have **heard the message**. We have **understood the message**. But we just can't bring ourselves to dropping our cases and theories and dreams and expectations and simply **submitting** to this God who loves us and gave himself for us. There is simply **no room** for rebellion in a believers life. We believe that truth more strongly when we experience the rebellion of our children. But somehow we are so very slow to get the point that it is **our rebellion** that God is convicting us of. It is **our rebellion** that must be overcome. We have got to drop the notion that **I know better than God** in any area of my life. We are, after all, all liars and only God is totally true. Where is that area this morning? Where do we know better than God? Just give it a moment's thought and it often comes to our minds. Because **we know what we are doing**. It is what we want to do. I urge you as well as myself this morning to just quit. Give it up. Look what it brings you. It will never bring you what the gospel of peace will bring you. It will never bring you what the blessing of God will bring you. Give it up.

**Contrary**- This means to say against, contradicting, cantankerous. Do you know those conversations you have where you know that the person **is just waiting for you to shut up** so they can tell you **how much they disagree with you**. And it doesn't seem to matter what you do to understand or restate their position, they just want a fight. That is how God describes the Jews in the day of Isaiah.

It didn't matter how long God would hold out his hands. As soon as a prophet would begin to speak, this is what he encountered. The people were always being **contrary**. They would never get with the program. They would never drop their pride.

Here too is an error to avoid. How are we with those who are in authority over us? Are we a **pleasure** to lead? Do we **look for ways** that we can honestly agree, or if we cannot agree that we can **at least** honestly follow? Or is the first word out of our mouth, every time we are told **to do** something, or told **how things will be**, something that resists, something that undermines, something that is contrary. And we can rest assured that if we are like that with human authority we are also like that with God's authority. We would do well to develop the attitude that Christ had toward His Father. We would do well to focus on the **yes**, and **I will**. We would do well to have our first question be **how can I accomplish this** thing rather than **how can I resist it**. We truly are experts at making our lives miserable. And we always do it by resisting God's way for our lives. It is not our **circumstances** that steal our peace. It is **how we face them** that determines our internal outcome.

There is one more point I wanted to make from this text and we touched on it earlier.

When we look at this text there is something that isn't obvious at first but it stands out when you begin to think about it.

Look who **initiates** the salvation in our text.

**Rom 10:18 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."19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by [those who are] not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."**

Look at all the times in these verses that God uses the word I to describe what goes on in salvation. It is all about Him.

First the message goes out by heralds that God sends. The listeners didn't **put in an order** for them. They would probably **never** do such a thing. Then who are the people who respond? The experts who have been trying to be experts all

their lives? Nope. It is the ignorant who respond. And who finds God. Is it those who have initiated **a search for God** in their own goodness? Not at all. God actively **manifested Himself** to those who never moved an inch in God's direction. And we find that it has been **God** who has been stretching out His hands all this time. Not **us**.

All we can say in conclusion is:

Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found was blind but now I see.