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No Excuses!

Romans 10.18-21

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

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I. Introduction

- A. We come to the end of Chapter 5 of Romans in our study which we have called The Pure Gospel
- B. **Romans 10:18-21** (ESV) —
 - 1. 18 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.”
 - 2. 19 But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”
 - 3. 20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”
 - 4. 21 But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”
- C. In this passage Paul is in the midst of dealing with the problem of Jews, most of whom in the 1st Century, did not embrace Jesus as Messiah
 - 1. It is the problem of Jewish unbelief
 - 2. But this text is just part of a much larger section of Romans that deals with this question
 - 3. From time to time it’s necessary to go back and put a passage like this in context
 - 4. So, let’s rewind a bit
- D. Remember Romans 8?
 - 1. I trust you do!
 - a. It’s an especially wonderful chapter
 - b. The climax of Paul’s glorious exposition of the gospel
 - 2. All of Romans, of course, is about the gospel
 - a. And before Paul gets to Romans 8 he has traversed an immense landscape of moral theology
 - b. He has described the inherent unrighteousness and idolatry of humankind
 - c. He has demonstrated that such inherent sinfulness is characteristic of both religious and non-religious people – both Jews and Gentiles
 - d. And yet he has shown that God has provided His own righteousness for us who so desperately need righteousness to stand before a holy God

- e. His own righteousness in Jesus Christ to all who believe in Him
- 3. He shows that through faith in Christ, God declares believers to be righteous
 - a. That we are justified by faith in Christ, apart from works of the Law, which none of us has ever been able to achieve
- 4. In chapters 6 and 7 Paul has shown that in justification something very significant has happened to the believer
 - a. That we have died to sin
 - b. That we have been united to Christ with a spiritual union
 - c. And that even though we have the remnants of the sinful nature still operating within us, we now have the capacity to live according to the righteousness of Christ
- 5. In Romans 8 Paul shows how, through the Holy Spirit, we are able to fulfill the Law of God
 - a. That the Spirit of Christ indwells the believer
 - b. Giving us the desire, inclination, and ability to live the life God calls us to live
 - c. For after all, Christ is able to live His life through us!
- 6. That's a glorious truth and it leads Paul to one of the most glorious passages in the whole Bible
 - a. A passage that lifts us spirits in glorious anticipation of spiritual triumph
- E. **Romans 8:31–39** (ESV) —
 - 1. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
 - 2. 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
 - 3. 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.
 - 4. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.
 - 5. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?
 - 6. 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."
 - 7. 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
 - 8. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,
 - 9. 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- F. If you are a genuine believer in Jesus, you have to be on cloud 9 (whatever that is!) just to listen to that incredible affirmation of our ultimate victory in Jesus
 - 1. It's even greater than West Virginia's upset overtime win against our hated rival Pitt

- a. Ok, so maybe not hate
 - b. But it was wonderful to watch!
- 2. But nothing comes close to the overwhelming joy expressed in that concluding passage in Romans 8!

II. Paul and Jewish Unbelief

- A. And then Paul says this...
- B. **Romans 9:1–2** (ESV) —
 - 1. 1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—
 - 2. 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
- C. What? What’s Paul talking about?
 - 1. How can he so exult exuberantly in the “more-than-conquering” love of Christ
 - 2. And then drop into a spiritual depression?
- D. **Great sorrow**
 - 1. **Unceasing anguish**
 - 2. Why?
- E. **Romans 9:3** (ESV) —
 - 1. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.
- F. Who’s he talking about?
- G. **Romans 9:4–5** (ESV) —
 - 1. 4 **They are Israelites**, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.
 - 2. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.
- H. Paul is talking about his own kinsmen; his own tribe as it were; his own people
 - 1. He’s talking about the Jewish people – Israelites
- I. And why is he so distraught?
 - 1. Because his kinsmen, his Jewish compatriots, have by and large rejected Christ
 - 2. And in that state, nothing Paul described at the end of chapter 8 – those glorious affirmations
 - a. None of that can apply to his Jewish kinsmen unless they cast themselves on the mercy of Christ
- J. And he’s so distraught that he says, “...I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers.”
 - 1. He says, “I’m so overwhelmed at this that I would be willing if I could to go to hell if it would mean their salvation”
- K. What are we willing to give up for the sake of sharing the salvation of Christ to our kinsmen, our family, our friends?
 - 1. He’s willing to die eternally for them
 - 2. Of course, Paul can’t do that; there is nothing Paul can do to take upon himself the just punishment for their rejection of Christ

3. Christ did that for everyone who would ever believe
 - a. Paul can't
 - b. Neither can we
- L. Now, what does Paul do to process this astonishing rejection of Christ
 1. From whom, Paul says, came not just the covenants and the law and the patriarchs – but also Christ himself came from them
 2. Salvation is from the Jews – Jesus told the Samaritan woman
 - a. That's because the Christ is Jewish
- M. So Paul spends the next three chapters working through the implications of his kinsmen's unbelief
 1. Chapters 9-11 are all about how this gospel relates to the Jewish people
 2. So Paul lays out an extended argument helping us to understand how this has happened
 - a. And he does it to affirm that in the final analysis, God has not forgotten Jewish people
- N. The argument – so far
 1. **All whom God has elected are or will be saved – Romans 9.6-24**
 - a. So God deals with the issue of the sovereignty of God in salvation
 - b. And he uses examples of Isaac v. Ishmael and Jacob v. Esau as examples
 - c. Examples right from the Hebrew scriptures
 2. **God already said that not all Israel would be saved, and that some Gentiles would be – Romans 9.25-29**
 - a. In fact, he said “not all Israel are Israel”
 - b. In other words, it is not being a Jew by birth is what makes one a true Israelite
 - c. It is by being a child of the promise
 - d. And that only a remnant of the sons of Jacob would be saved, according to the Hebrew scriptures
 3. Then, when Paul moves into Chapter 10 and begins to deal with the human responsibility side of salvation, he says...
 - a. **The failure of the Jews to believe was their own fault – Romans 9.30-10.21**
 4. This is the part of the argument where our text today is located
 - a. And Paul's processing of the Jewish salvation question will continue all the way through Chapter 11
 - b. And will ultimately come to what I would argue is a glorious conclusion
 - c. Ah – but we're not there yet!
- O. Now, remember as well the passage we've just recently studied
 1. That wonderful passage which affirms the human responsibility to call on the Lord for salvation
 - a. And the relentless argument for evangelism and missions
 2. **Romans 10:13-17 (ESV) —**
 - a. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- b. 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?
 - c. And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?
 - d. And how are they to hear without someone preaching?
 - e. 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent?
 - f. As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”
 - g. 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”
 - h. 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
 - 3. Not all have obeyed the gospel
 - a. Paul wasn’t the first to decry Jewish unbelief
 - b. It was Isaiah who complained, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”
- P. So in our text today, we try to understand this Jewish unbelief
 - 1. And Paul does it the way he deals with a lot of other issues
 - a. He proposes certain objections to his arguments, and then answers them
 - b. Only this time, he does it through the lens of excuses
- Q. Excuses, excuses!
 - 1. Don’t we love excuses!
 - 2. Excuse-making may not be the primordial sin
 - a. That was the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the eating of the forbidden fruit
 - b. But it certainly followed that sin like a tail is attached to a dog!
 - 3. For Adam says to God, “The woman you gave me, she gave me the fruit”
 - a. So Adam’s excuse not only blames Eve, but blames God for giving him Eve!
 - 4. And then Eve’s excuse is to blame the serpent
 - 5. But it’s worth pointing out that neither excuse pulled the wool over God’s eyes!
 - a. He didn’t buy any of it
 - b. He cursed Adam and Eve and the Serpent anyway!
- R. But what about these Jewish people?
 - 1. Do they have any excuses for rejecting Christ?

III. **Excuse 1: They Haven’t Heard**

- A. **Romans 10:18** (ESV) —
 - 1. 18 **But I ask, have they not heard?**
 - 2. **Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”**
- B. One excuse – and it’s an excuse we considered for all humanity back in Romans 1 – is that of ignorance
 - 1. “We don’t believe because we haven’t heard anything about Christ!”

- C. Back when I was in graduate school I did a semester internship teaching sport in the Ohio State School for the Deaf
 - 1. I have to say, with great respect to all the hearing impaired whom I very much admire (we have family members who are deaf)
 - 2. That teaching the deaf was one of the most challenging teaching experiences I've ever had
 - a. The high school group especially were highly skilled in feigning ignorance
 - b. "I don't know! I don't hear anything! I have no idea what you want me to do!"
 - 3. Now, they all knew what to do
 - a. But if they didn't want to do it, they used their deafness as an excuse
 - 4. That's not unique to the deaf
 - a. Lot's people use ignorance as an excuse for failure to take responsibility for their actions
 - 5. But that's the question: "have they not heard?"
- D. Remember I mentioned that Paul dealt with the ignorance excuse back in Chapter 1
 - 1. And that wasn't about the Jews, but about all humans (**Romans 1.18-20**)
 - 2. Who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness"
 - a. Even though "what may be know about God has been made plain to them"
 - b. That "the divine nature and eternal power of God are clearly see through what has been made"
 - 3. So that Paul concludes **"so they are without excuse"**
- E. So Paul answers in the same way
 - 1. **Romans 10:18** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 But I ask, have they not heard?
 - b. Indeed they have, for **"Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."**
 - 2. So Paul says, "Have they not heard?"
 - a. "Yes they have!"
 - b. And then he quotes the Hebrew scriptures
- F. Now, here's where it gets interesting
 - 1. Paul quotes from Psalm 19.4
 - 2. **Psalm 19:4** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world....
 - 3. Psalm 19 is a wonderful psalm about the revelation of God
 - a. And there are two aspects to the revelation of God
 - 4. The first part of Psalm 19 is about what we call **"General Revelation"**
 - a. **Psalm 19:1** (ESV) — 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
 - 5. Verse 4 is part of this General Revelation

- a. The heavens has a “voice” as it were
 - b. And it’s “words” go to the end of the world
- 6. Then, the second half of Psalm 19 is about what we call “Special Revelation”
 - a. “Special Revelation” is about the scriptures, the Word of God
 - b. That starts in v. 7
 - c. Psalm 19:7 (ESV) — 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul...
 - d. It goes on to then speak of the testimonies, the precepts, the commandments, the rules and so forth
- 7. So, Psalm 19 – Revelation of God
 - a. General – the created world
 - b. Special – the scriptures
- G. But here’s the interesting part
 - 1. The gospel is proclaimed to the Jewish people through the scriptures
 - a. Through the prophets
 - b. From Moses, through the historical books
 - c. All the way through the Psalms and the major and minor prophets
 - 2. But Paul quotes from the part of Psalm 19 that deals with General Revelation
 - a. It’s General Revelation that has gone out to all the earth, to the end of the world
 - b. It’s General Revelation that holds all humans accountable according to Romans 1
 - 3. But the gospel is only communicated through the scriptures
 - a. So why does Paul use the part about General Revelation
 - b. When the Jewish people could only hear the gospel through Special Revelation, through the scriptures?
- H. Well, the answer to that is not really all that complicated
 - 1. Remember, Paul’s concern is for his Jewish kinsmen
 - 2. And while many other peoples in the rest of the planet have not heard the gospel because they haven’t had the Jewish scriptures
 - a. They Jewish people have had the scriptures
 - 3. So Paul takes the universality of the message of God as seen in General Revelation
 - a. “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world”
 - 4. And he says, as far as the Jewish people are concerned, all Jews everywhere have heard the scriptures
 - a. The Jews are people of the book
 - b. They are identified with the Word of God
 - 5. To the Jews, having heard the Word of God is like the sun rising everyday in the east!
 - a. To the Jewish people, the scriptures are just as universally known as the stars in the sky and the fish in the sea!

- I. So the Jewish people *have* heard the gospel
 - 1. “Have they not heard?”
 - 2. “Indeed they have!” says Paul
- J. So, they are without that excuse
 - 1. The Jewish people cannot claim they have never heard

IV. **Excuse 2: They Didn’t Understand**

- A. So, what’s excuse number 2?
 - 1. Ok, I heard it, but I didn’t understand it
- B. **Romans 10:19** (ESV) —
 - 1. 19 **But I ask, did Israel not understand?**
- C. Well, Paul answers that the same way he answered the first excuse
 - 1. By quoting the Hebrew scriptures
 - 2. And the way he addresses the issue of understanding is by taking the scriptures a step farther
 - a. By showing that the scriptures not only spoke about how one comes to be justified by faith
 - b. But by showing that the Hebrew Bible all along spoke about God’s plan to save Gentiles
- D. **Romans 10:19** (ESV) —
 - 1. 19 **... First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”**
 - 2. That goes all the way back to **Deuteronomy 32.21**
 - a. Even before they enter the Promised Land, the Jewish people were taught that God would make the Jewish people jealous of people who were not part of the nation of Israel!
- E. Then Paul jumps ahead, from Moses and the Pentateuch, all the way to the prophets, to Isaiah
- F. **Romans 10:20** (ESV) —
 - 1. 20 **Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”**
 - 2. Those are Gentile nations – who never set out seeking God, who were nevertheless found by God
- G. So not only did the Jewish people in Paul’s day hear the gospel through the scriptures
 - 1. They very well knew that the gospel would go beyond national Israel
 - 2. That God would save the very people the Jews grew to hate
 - 3. They not only heard; they understood
- H. It’s like the stunning revelation that Mountaineer fans will eventually have to come to grips with
 - 1. That God may actually show favor on some people from the University of Pittsburgh
- I. So, excuses, excuses
 - 1. They haven’t heard
 - a. Yes they have

- b. Through the scriptures
 - 2. They didn't understand
 - a. Yes they have
 - b. Because the scriptures were clear about how God would save Gentiles too

V. **The Stunning Contrast**

- A. Now, I realize that may seem like we're getting into the weeds of biblical theology
 - 1. But behind it all is the coup de grace
 - 2. Behind it all is a God whose heart for lost people – Jew and Gentile
 - a. Is the same heart that consumes Paul's desperate longing for the salvation of his own kinsmen
- B. Paul says, "... I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (**Romans 9.2-3**)
 - 1. And he says, "... my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved." (**Romans 10.1**)
- C. And now he says, his heart is the same as God's heart
- D. **Romans 10:21** (ESV) —
 - 1. 21 **But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."**
- E. Once again, Paul quotes **Isaiah 65.2**
 - 1. He just quoted Isaiah from the verse right before it, Isaiah 65.1
 - a. "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."
 - 2. And then he says – God says – "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."
- F. Just think of the continuousness of God's concern for His people
 - 1. "All day long..."
 - a. What does He do all day long?
 - b. He holds out his hands to these people
 - 2. Have you ever tried to hold out your hands?
 - a. How long do you think you can do that?
 - b. 30 seconds
 - c. 1 minute, maybe
 - d. All day long? Don't even pretend
 - 3. "All day long" is a euphemism, of course
 - a. That God is relentless in His reaching out to His chosen people that they may be saved
- G. And think of the compassion of this God
 - 1. Like a parent reaching out for a distressed child
 - 2. Like a husband or wife reaching out to each other
 - 3. Or like Jesus whose arms were outstretched on the cross, symbolizing His embrace of a world in desperate need
- H. Just think of the compassion of Jesus

1. How He reached out and touched the untouchable leper (**Matthew 8.3**)
 2. How He healed two blind men by touching their eyes (**Matthew 9.29-30**)
 3. How He reached out and caught Peter when Peter was trying to follow Jesus by walking on the water, when he was sinking (**Matthew 14.31**)
 4. How He put His hands on little children and blessed them (**Mark 10.16**)
 5. How when He ascended into heaven, He lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples (**Luke 14.50**)
- I. **Luke 19:41–42** (ESV) —
1. 41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,
 2. 42 saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”
 - a. Surely, His compassionate hands were outstretched over the city when He wept over it
- J. But there’s a stunning contrast in this verse
1. “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.” (**Romans 10.21**)
 2. The compassionate, loving, longing God
 - a. Stretching out His hands
 3. To whom?
 - a. To children running to embrace His love?
 - b. To spouses longing to find each other’s arms?
 4. No!
 - a. To a disobedient and contrary people
 - b. To a people who want nothing to do with this God
 - c. With this God who declared Himself from the very beginning of the Hebrews scriptures to be gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding love and faithfulness
- K. Dear friends, are you still unwilling to embrace the love of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ?
1. Messiah Jesus?
 2. Are you still that obstinate?
 - a. Are you still that contrary?
 - b. Are you still that disobedient?
- L. You’ve heard!
1. Week in and week out – we have preached Christ to you
- M. You’ve understood it!
1. We’ve explained it to you
 2. Over and over again
- N. And are you still, in your pride and self-sufficiency, resisting the outstretched arms of a relentlessly compassionate God?
- O. And believer, do you have the heart of God for lost people?
1. Do you have the heart of Paul, who would have crawled across miles of broken glass to speak of Jesus to anyone who would listen?
- P. **Romans 10:21** (ESV) —

1. 21 ... “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”