

Romans 10: Toward the autograph

There have been a great many accomplished scholars who have devoted much of their lives to Biblical study and in particular to the Epistle to the Romans. For example, the impressive 'Romans' by CEB Cranfield, Emeritus Professor of Theology at the University of Durham, England. Cranfield is considered one of the best authorities on Romans. Similarly, FF Bruce's 'NIV Bible Commentary' contains a concise commentary on Romans by Prof Leslie C Allen, Prof. of Old Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary.

How could I then, possibly have the audacity to suggest these great scholars got some of their commentary wrong?

When I read their understanding, I find almost every verse and every significant comment that they make to be based on some prior presuppositions; presuppositions that I totally reject. The first and perhaps most significant is their belief in the Trinity, that is that Jesus is God. This clearly brings them to the text with a significantly different a-priori understanding.

Added to this there clear pre-suppositional belief in the doctrine of 'original sin', and the consequential belief that righteousness through obedience (other than for Jesus/Yeshua) is impossible and you may now see why we would come to different interpretations.

So, in trying to come to the chapter without these faulty presuppositions and trying only to use clear and unequivocal foundational doctrines from the Tanakh, I think that a different understanding and appreciation of the chapter emerges.

This understanding is based on my pre-supposition that the Apostle Paul (Sha'ul) was a Torah-observant Jew his entire life. That is, his encounter with Yeshua on the road to Damascus, did change his life dramatically, but it did not, in any way change his faith in and obedience to, the Torah. For support for this doctrinal pre-supposition, I refer you to my short book, 'The Apostle Paul: Weighing the Evidence'¹ and the books and articles of Prof. Mark Nanos².

To best present where I think Romans 10 has been redacted (edited) and interpolated (added to), I will first present a version of Romans 10 that I see as more likely closer to the original, the autograph. In other words, my version is a further redacted version that attempts to move the text back towards the original.

It is important to appreciate that, because of the shared Hebraic understanding of the Apostle Paul's intended audience, (given the great oral knowledge of the Tanakh³, and especially the Torah – the Books of Moses, and the major prophets like Isaiah - read in the synagogues as part of the Torah and Haftorah portion each Sabbath), in quoting a single line, Paul's audience would generally have appreciated the whole context and section of the Hebrew Scriptures from where this verse originated.

To accentuate this for a modern audience less familiar with the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, I have included a little more of each quote from the Tanakh, so as to try and communicate the context more clearly given that today's readership is not nearly as familiar with the Tanakh as the Apostle Paul's audience would have been, especially the Jewish readers amongst them.

While the Apostle Paul was speaking primarily to God-fearers and Gentile followers of Yeshua in Rome, as they met in Synagogues where these letters would have been read out, any Gentile lack of understanding of the quoted passages from the Tanakh would most likely have been clarified by the Jewish brethren present in the Jewish communities that these Gentile followers were now part of⁴.

The references from the Hebrew Scriptures are mostly from the Hebrew-English Tanakh: the Jewish Bible, (Varda Books, 2009):

¹ <http://www.amazon.com/Defending-The-Apostle-Paul-ebook/dp/B009TLLK0U/>

² <http://marknanos.com/>

³ Mistakenly and sadly called the 'Old Testament' by Christians

⁴ For the best book on Romans, and the details on Paul's intended audience see 'The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letters' by Mark Nanos, 1996

Romans 10:

1. Brothers, my heart's deepest desire and my prayer to God for all Israel is for their salvation;
2 for I can testify to their zeal for God. But for some this zeal is not based on correct understanding;
3 but instead they seek to set up their own path to righteousness. They have not submitted themselves to God's way of making people righteous.

4 For the **Messiah completes the Torah**⁵, which offers righteousness to everyone who trusts in it.

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness grounded in the Torah, and states that the person who does these things, that is, is obedient to Torah, will attain life through doing them.

6 Further, the righteousness grounded in such trusting or faithfulness says:

"Then Adonai your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. ... (when) you obey Adonai your God (and) keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in the Torah, (when) you turn to the Adonai your God with all your heart and soul.

For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

It is not in heaven,

7 that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'

*8 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it."*⁶ (from Deut 30:6-14)

10 For with the heart one goes on trusting, and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement, and thus continues toward deliverance.

11 For the passage quoted was repeated by Isaiah when he said:

"Therefore hear the word of Adonai, you scoffers ... "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, A tried stone, a costly corner-stone of sure foundation [i.e. the Torah]; He that believes shall remain steadfast. I will make justice the plumb-line, and righteousness the plumb-bob ..." (from Isaiah 28:14 - 17)

12 That means that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - ADONAI is the same for everyone, rich toward everyone who calls on Him,

13 since everyone who calls on the name of ADONAI will be delivered. As Joel states:

"Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the Day of Adonai is coming; Surely it is near, ... And it will come to pass that whoever calls on the name of Adonai will be delivered" (Joel 2:1, 3:5 Hebrew-English Tanakh - or Joel 2:32 in most English versions)

16 The problem is that they haven't all paid attention to the good news of the Kingdom of God and obeyed it. For Isaiah says, "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of Adonai been revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1)

17 So trust comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through a word proclaimed about the Messiah.

18 "But, I say, isn't it rather that they didn't hear?" No, they did hear:

"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their sound has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world." (Ps 19:1-4)

19 "But, I say, isn't it rather that Israel didn't understand?" But Adonai states through Moses: "They have made Me jealous with what is not [of] God; They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities [i.e. the traditions of men]. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people [of God]; I will provoke them to anger with a nation lacking understanding [i.e. gentiles]."

20 Also, Isaiah boldly speaks for the Almighty and states,

"I was found by those who were not looking for Me, I became known to those who did not ask for Me. I said: 'Behold Me, behold Me', to a nation that was not called by My Name (that is, to Gentiles);

21 and to some of Israel he says,

"I have spread out My hands all day, to a rebellious people, That walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts."

But He also states:

"... I will not destroy all, for I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of My mountains; And My elect shall inherit it." (Isaiah 65:1-2, 8-9)

Romans 11:1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!

⁵ This portion is often given as 'The goal of Torah is Messiah' – I discuss this in some depth in my article 'The Goal of Messiah' at www.circumcisedheart.info

⁶ Note that Romans 10:9 is missing from my version. Romans 10:9 just does not fit with the context and flow of the text. I believe it is an interpolation to the original text.

The Missing Verse:

May I suggest you re-read the version presented above at least once more and try to sense the flow of the text as I have tried to faithfully present it. In verse 6, we read the Apostle Paul speaking eloquently about faithfulness to God being at its heart the obeying the commandments and statutes of God, and as part of this argument he speaks of turning (repenting) back to God with all your heart and soul. Here we hear echo's of the Sh'ma (Deut 6:4 ...), the clarion call of Judaism to this day, the summation of Torah that Yeshua also often referred to.

After, the questionable verse 9, we read the Apostle Paul further expanding this very Jewish understanding to explain that obedience to Torah is all about justice and righteousness and that these attributes of obedience are universal attributes. That is, everyone, whether Jew or Gentile can act justly. Everyone, whether Jew or Gentile can live righteously. These are not just the prerogative's of the Jewish people. Because they are universal, they apply universally. Thus, as the Apostle Paul goes on to state, in this sense of faithfulness, there really is no difference between Jew and Gentile.

So, again I beg your indulgence to re-read this short chapter with this underlying mindset. Having done so, does it appear that there is something missing between verses 8 and 10 above? I would argue a most definite no!

Now, here then is a common version of verse 9 as traditionally included:

"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

What do you immediately notice about this apparent 'interpolation'? It introduces an outside party into the argument that was not needed.

Further, it totally changes the whole emphasis of what faithfulness to God is! It changes a faithfulness that is action-based (a very Hebraic understanding); that involves acting justly and righteously, with a faithfulness that instead requires a mental acknowledgement of the resurrection of Jesus/Yeshua to be faithful and receive salvation.

Perhaps even worse, it conflicts with the call to faithfulness in the Almighty that Yeshua consistently taught, and it conflicts with the faithfulness to God that the Apostle Paul himself taught, for example in Romans 3:22⁷.

When carefully studied, I would argue then that verse 9 is a most clever and insidious, but seriously damaging interpolation, because it seeks to dramatically change and in fact reject, the whole emphasis of the Apostle Paul's argument. This verse seeks to reject his call for obedience to the divine instructions of God (the Torah).

If I am correct, then I would argue that the translators and scholars involved in adding this interpolation have sought to cause a serious rift with the Jewish/Hebraic foundations of both Yeshua and his Apostle to the Gentiles. That they have been hugely successful is undeniable; as is the great harm this has ultimately brought upon the Jewish people.

It is also a most welcome but unexpected revelation, that despite all the anti-Semitism that such redactions and interpolations have caused⁸, some great Jewish scholars such as Mark Nanos and the late Prof. David Flusser have seen fit to devote their lives to revealing the true Jewish identities of Jesus and Paul.

If this article has you re-reading Romans 10 and then moving on to Romans 11 and finding apparently anti-Semitic references in chapter 11, may I suggest a short article by Mark Nanos, *'The Translation of Romans 11 Since the Shoah: What's Different? What's Not? What Could Be?'*⁹.

*Paul Herring
Re-edit May 2013*

⁷ See my article 'The Faith of Jesus' - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/The%20Faith%20of%20Jesus.pdf>

⁸ For more details on this see my article on 1 Thess 2:14-16 - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/1%20Thess%202.pdf> and Phil 3 - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Re-evaluating%20Philippians%203.pdf>

⁹ <http://marknanos.com/HK-Romans11Seminar-10-12-12.pdf>