

Facilitator Notes for *Set Free!* – A Study in Romans
Lesson 14 ~ "Stone Deaf" Romans 9:30-10:21

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

Questions

Read Romans 9:30-10:4.

1. *Irony* is a state of affairs or an event that seems *deliberately contrary to what one expects*. What situation does Paul describe in 9:30-33 and what makes it *ironic*?

One would expect that the people to whom God called out from all the other nations of the world, the people to whom scripture was given by the prophets and people to whom the Messiah was promised would be the first ones to accept and receive right standing before God (righteousness) by faith. This, however, is not what happened. The Gentiles, who were not even looking for God, have been made right with God by faith and the Jews, who worked hard at keeping God's law, did not attain righteousness.

2. What is the deciding difference between people who have attained a right standing with God and people who have not (9:30-32)?

FAITH is the deciding difference. The gospel was preached to both Jews and Gentiles, but it was being accepted by far more Gentiles than Jews. The Gentiles did not have God's law, did not even know God, and were not even "trying to be righteous," yet they were obtaining righteousness because when they did hear the good news, they were coming to God by faith in Jesus Christ. They were accepting, by faith, that Jesus had won righteousness from them.

In contrast, the Jews tried to obtain righteousness by obeying the law and through working for it. They could not keep the law perfectly, therefore they could not keep it at all. Thus, they were not able to attain right standing before God.

- ♥ Regardless of your ethnic identity, in which of the two groups that Paul mentions, would you place yourself (9:30-31)? Why?
- ♥ What is the basic problem with the "Jewish approach" to righteousness (Romans 3:20; 7:7-11)? **It is impossible to keep the law perfectly and just knowing the law makes us want to sin!** If we *could* save ourselves by works or keeping the law, what would it take? **Perfection!**
- ♥ Why will there *always* be something in us that wants to earn our right standing before God? What is this "*something*?"

It is our fallen nature that wants to earn our way and the basis of this desire is pride.

3. In 9:33, Paul quotes from two verses in Isaiah that point to Jesus Christ as a *stone* or *rock*, that has been placed by God. According to 1 Peter 2:4-8, how is Jesus **either** a *precious cornerstone, safe to build on* (Isaiah 28:16) or a *stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall* (Isaiah 8:14)?

To those who accept Jesus, who his is and what he has done – Jesus will be a precious cornerstone on which we build our life. To those who reject Jesus and try to gain acceptance with God on their own, he becomes a stone or rock in the path of life that causes them to stumble and fall. **Are you humbled or stumbled by Jesus?**

- ♥ What are all the things you learn about Jesus in 9:33? How do you picture Jesus as a **rock** or **stone**?
- ♥ Read Psalm 118:22-23. What is Jesus saying about himself in Mark 12:1-12? How does this relate to what Paul is saying in 9:30-33? **Jesus used this parable to show that he was the "son" that was rejected and killed (the stone the builders rejected.)** However the stone that was rejected, became the "capstone" or "cornerstone" (the most important stone of a foundation). Jesus' words in Mark 12:9 are prophetic. "What will the owner (Father God) of the vineyard do? He will give the vineyard to others. The Jews should have inherited the vineyard but it will be given to the Gentiles instead.

♥ What is it about Jesus that causes people to spiritually stumble and fall? Why is Jesus a stumbling stone to *anyone* who tries to earn a right standing with God by being a good person or doing good works (**Galatians 2:21; Ephesians 2:8-9**)? If righteousness could be gained any other way (by keeping the law, being a good person or doing good works) then there would have been no reason for Jesus to die. Furthermore, if there was some other way to be reconciled to God, then of course, God would not have sent Jesus to die to pay the penalty for our sins. Salvation is a gift from God, but some do not to humble themselves to accept the gift. Pride says, "I will be in control; I will earn my way. I will not be dependent on anyone."

4. **Zeal** means to have great energy and enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or objective. Why wasn't Israel's zeal for God enough to keep them from stumbling (**10:1-3**)?

There zeal and enthusiasm is misdirected. They don't want to receive salvation God's way; rather, they sought to establish their own way and clinging to that. Jesus was not the Messiah the Jews expected so they rejected him. They were so enthusiastic about working their way to God and keeping the rules and priding themselves in being God's chosen that they refused to change their ways. Many of them rejected Jesus rather than change and admit they were wrong.

♥ Can you think of a time when you were zealous for something good, yet were wrong in the way you tried to attain it? What was the outcome?

♥ How did the Jews' zeal actually keep them from understanding God's way of salvation? (see above) What does zeal need in order to make it beneficial (**10:2-3**)? **Zeal needs to be based on correct knowledge or truth (10:2).**

♥ How was Paul's life before he met Christ on the Damascus road an example of misdirected zeal (**Galatians 1:13-14; Acts 22:3-5**)? What are some contemporary examples of people showing zeal in the wrong way or for the wrong cause. What are the consequences?

5. In what ways is Jesus the *end of the law* (**10:4**), *accomplishing the whole purpose of the law* (**Hebrews 10:1-4**)? Jesus is the "end of the law" in the sense that the law was not longer the way to be right with God – and besides, the law did not really take care of the problem of sin anyway (**Hebrews 10:1-4**). Jesus was the final and perfect sacrifice for our sins and no other sacrifice need ever be made. Instead of seeking justification thorough the law, we receive justification by faith and use the law to guide our obedience to God. Through Jesus, grace and righteousness is offered to all, both Jew and Gentile. Jesus did not change the law – he changed our way of seeing the law. What ended was the view that the law was the way to achieve righteousness and the belief that Israel was the only recipient of that righteousness.

♥ God's way of salvation through faith is quite simple and easy; there is righteousness for everyone who believes in Jesus (**10:4**). Why do people cling to their own ways of getting right with God instead of accepting God's way (**10:3**)? How do you sometimes try to get right with God?

♥ Is it possible to believe in the one, true God but not accept that belief in Jesus as the only way to be righteous before God? Why or why not? (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**) **The Bible is clear that faith in Jesus is the only way to be reconciled to God.** There are many people today who may believe in the true God, just as the Jews did of Paul's day, but they reject that Jesus is the only way to have a relationship with God. This is hard for us to hear – and our heart breaks for those we love just as Paul's heart broke for the Jewish people he loved who rejected Jesus.

♥ What are some reasons why we can't establish our own way of getting right with God (**10:3**)?

Any way that we would establish would either not be good enough or, if it was, we would not be able to fulfill its standards. Simply put, it would take perfection and there is no perfect human.

Read **Romans 10:5-13**.

In these verses, Paul quotes freely from the writings of **Moses** in the **Old Testament scriptures**. He does this for two reasons. First, he is primarily speaking to Jews who know and respect the writings of Moses; and second, because he wants to show that the law and the Old Testament scriptures have always pointed to and anticipated a righteousness that is by faith alone. This does not mean that the law is tossed aside and has no value. It is still a guide and standard on how to live life. However, keeping the law is no longer the means of attaining a right standing with God. Faith in Jesus Christ, who perfectly fulfilled the law, is now the way to gain righteousness. When we believe, we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. We receive a righteousness that was never possible under the law.

6. Read **10:5-8** in the NLT. What are some of the differences you see between attaining righteousness under the law and attaining it through Christ?

In these verses, Paul contrasts two ways of seeking righteousness. The first way is by self-effort and law-keeping. This amounts to self-righteousness and it is the way the majority of the Jews chose. As a result, they failed to obtain righteousness. The second way is the only true way, by grace (God's free favor) through faith (believing) who Jesus is and what he did for us.

10:5 – If we depend on the law (our works) for righteousness, we must obey all the commands, perfectly.

10:6-8 – If we depend of faith to get right with God we don't have to go looking for Jesus Christ or ways to be made righteous. Jesus has already come from heaven and lived on earth and he has already risen from the dead. Our righteousness (or anything else we do) can't contribute, in any way, to God's saving plan. God has made sure that salvation is within easy reach of anyone.

Before people even begin to look for God, he is already present, and no matter how far they go out of their way to find him, he is never farther away than when they first started out. As long as we insist on doing the finding, we will discover that the search never ends. But if we begin by trusting God, we discover he is to found right where we are.

- ♥ Apply what Paul was saying to the Jews about how we are made righteous to what you could say to a devoutly religious person in our day who is trusting in religious practices.
- ♥ God makes salvation *near to* or *within easy reach* of everyone (**10:8**). What does this tell us about the character of God? Does your concept of God agree with this picture of God? Why or why not?
- ♥ What is the main problem in trying to earn our way into God's good graces by being a good person (**James 2:10**)? You can't divide the law into "parts." If we break one point of the law, we are guilty of breaking the whole law. Of course no one is perfect, so no one can keep the law perfectly. What does it mean when we say, "God doesn't grade on a curve?" God does not compare our efforts or goodness to others and then judge us on how well we are doing compared to everyone else. Rather, there is only one grading scale – perfection. We all were born short and we all fall short. This is why God offers us grace if we only believe. Then, we are judged by Jesus' righteousness and not our own.

7. What are the simple instructions Paul gives regarding personal salvation (**10:9-10**)?

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the death, you will be saved! All God asks for is belief in our hearts along with verbal affirmation of the truth!

8. *Believe* means to *be convinced of* and to *entrust oneself to* and *confess* means to *acknowledge* or to *say the same as*. Why is both *believing* with the heart (inward) and *confessing* with the mouth (outward) necessary for salvation?

If belief is real, it cannot be kept secret. When we trust in Christ, we become new creations and there will be verbal affirmation or acknowledgement as to what has happened in our heart. However, it is possible to say we believe, but not mean it in our heart. If our belief is real, it will happen in our hearts but also be acknowledged outwardly. Confess and to believe become mutually related responses. If one is true, the other will follow.

- ♥ When did you first *believe* and *confess*? Were these two actions simultaneous for you? Could there be a gap of time between them? Why or why not? How have you confessed that Jesus is *your* Lord?
- ♥ Is it possible to **believe** without **confessing**? Why or why not? Is it possible to **confess** without **believing**? Why or why not? **If both belief and confession are genuine, there cannot be one without the other. However, we could say we believe but not mean it in our heart.**
- ♥ Why are believing both **truths, Jesus is Lord** and **God raised Jesus from the dead**, essential to salvation? If one or the other of these truths were left out, what difference would it make?

The title Lord has great meaning in Paul's day. It was a title of respect, a form of address for Roman emperors (similar to "royal highness", a title given to Greek gods, and the title used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to translate the Hebrew name for God (YAHWEH). When we confess the Jesus is Lord, we are acknowledging his rank or supreme place. We are also pledging our obedience and worship; we are placing our life under his protection for safekeeping. We are pledging ourselves and our resources to his control for direction and service. LORD is intended to represent the highest authority to whom we submit. Jesus is our Savior and he also our Lord.

Belief in the resurrection is also interrelated with our salvation. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." Jesus death paid the penalty for our sins and his resurrection proved his victory over death. Belief in the resurrection is essential to our salvation. Without it, Christ was nothing more than a martyr.

9. Paul has already stated that Jesus Christ is *easily* accessible to all (10:6-8). In 10:11-13, how does he show that Christ is *equally* accessible to all?

ANYONE who trust in Jesus will never be put to shame (never be disappointed).

There is no difference between Jew or Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of ALL – who generously gives riches to ALL who ask. **ANYONE** who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

10. In each of the three verses below, what action must we take to receive God's response? Who gets the better end of the deal? Why?

Verse	Our Action	God's Response
10:11	trust or believe in him	will never be put to shame or be disappointed
10:12	we call on him or ask him	richly blesses us (generously gives his riches)
10:13	call on the name of the Lord	will be saved

- ♥ On what basis is Paul saying that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile (10:12)? **We are all sinners and we are all saved the same way; we call on the name of the Lord.** What else does he add in **Galatians 3:28**? **No difference between slave or free, male or female – all are one in Christ.** What significance does this have for you? How have you seen Jesus to be an equalizer in our culture? Where does his equalizing effect still need to be seen?
- ♥ The main declaration of the early church was, "Jesus is Lord" while the culture of the day said, "Caesar is Lord." **Who** or **what** are some gods of our culture that compete with your allegiance to Christ?
- ♥ If you believe in Jesus, is he automatically Lord of your life? Why or why not? What does it mean to have Jesus be Lord of your life? (See heart question under Question 8)How important is it? What or who else could be lord of your life?

Read **Romans 10:14-21**.

11. Jesus is *easily* accessible and *equally* accessible, but what must happen before *anyone* can call on the name of the Lord to be saved (10:14-15)? **We have to hear the good news – and we hear it by someone telling us**

- ♥ *Preach* means to *announce* or *proclaim*. Is it your responsibility to preach the gospel? **How can we NOT proclaim what Jesus has done for us?** Why or why not? Can *living your life for Christ* be a form of preaching? **Yes** Why or why not? Is it enough? **Living the life is important, but it not enough to tell someone how to be saved. At some point, the truth has to be declared and a person needs to know how to respond to that truth. 10:17 – Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.** Why or why not?
 - ♥ Have you ever shared the good news with someone? What happened? Who is someone you know who needs to hear the gospel? What will you do about it?
 - ♥ If someone asked you, “What’s the difference between Christianity and other religions?”, how would you answer? Do you think this is an important question? Why or why not?
12. In **10:16-21**, Paul considers Israel’s unbelief. What two questions does he ask in **10:18-19** and what conclusion does he come to about why Israel has not accepted the good news?
Did Israel not hear? Did Israel not understand? Yes, they did hear and yes, they did understand. The gospel was preached to first the Jew and then the Gentile (1:16) and the Jews knowledge of their own scriptures should have led them to believe in Christ. However, they chose not to believe and submit. Bringing people good news does not guarantee a welcome!
- ♥ How are the reasons for Israel’s unbelief similar to or different from reasons people have today?
 - ♥ Isaiah described Israel as “a disobedient and obstinate people” (**10:21**). How do you think he would describe contemporary culture? How would he describe you?
 - ♥ What groups of people in our society resemble the unbelieving Jews of Paul's time?

Response

What is your responsibility once you have heard the good news about Jesus (**10:9, 13**)? What is your responsibility once you have believed in Jesus (**10:14-15**)? How responsible are you being?

BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME

NIV

1Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— **5** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” **7** Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” **8** and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

Isaiah 28:16 So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

Isaiah 8:14 and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.

Psalms 118:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; **23** the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Mark 12:1-12 He then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. **2** At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. **3** But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. **4** Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. **5** He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. **6** “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ **7** “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ **8** So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. **9** “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. **10** Haven’t you read this scripture: “‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; **11** the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” **12** Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Galatians 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast.

Galatians 1:13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. **14** I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Acts 22:3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. **4** I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, **5** as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

Hebrews 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. **2** If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. **3** But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, **4** because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

NLT

1Peter 2:4-8 Come to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by the people, but he is precious to God who chose him.

5 And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ. **6** As the Scriptures express it, "I am placing a stone in Jerusalem, a chosen cornerstone, and anyone who believes in him will never be disappointed."

7 Yes, he is very precious to you who believe. But for those who reject him, "The stone that was rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone."

8 And the Scriptures also say, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that will make them fall." They stumble because they do not listen to God's word or obey it, and so they meet the fate that has been planned for them.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem. It is firm, a tested and precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never run away again.

Isaiah 8:14 He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap that entangles them.

Psalms 118:22 The stone rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone. **23** This is the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous to see.

Mark 12:1-12 Then Jesus began telling them stories: "A man planted a vineyard, built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. **2** At grape-picking time he sent one of his servants to collect his share of the crop. **3** But the farmers grabbed the servant, beat him up, and sent him back empty-handed. **4** "The owner then sent another servant, but they beat him over the head and treated him shamefully. **5** The next servant he sent was killed. Others who were sent were either beaten or killed, **6** until there was only one left—his son whom he loved dearly. The owner finally sent him, thinking, 'Surely they will respect my son.'

7 "But the farmers said to one another, 'Here comes the heir to this estate. Let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!' **8** So they grabbed him and murdered him and threw his body out of the vineyard.

9 "What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do?" Jesus asked. "I'll tell you—he will come and kill them all and lease the vineyard to others. **10** Didn't you ever read this in the Scriptures? 'The stone rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone. **11** This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous to see.'" **12** The Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him for using this illustration because they realized he was pointing at them—they were the wicked farmers in his story. But they were afraid to touch him because of the crowds. So they left him and went away.

Galatians 2:21 I am not one of those who treats the grace of God as meaningless. For if we could be saved by keeping the law, then there was no need for Christ to die.

Ephesians 2:8-9 God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. **9** Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Galatians 1:13-14 You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted the Christians. I did my best to get rid of them. **14** I was one of the most religious Jews of my own age, and I tried as hard as possible to follow all the old traditions of my religion.

Acts 22:3-5 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. At his feet I learned to follow our Jewish laws and customs very carefully. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just as all of you are today. **4** And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, binding and delivering both men and women to prison. **5** The high priest and the whole council of leaders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the Christians from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

Hebrews 10:1-4 The old system in the law of Moses was only a shadow of the things to come, not the reality of the good things Christ has done for us. The sacrifices under the old system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. **2** If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshippers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. **3** But just the opposite happened. Those yearly sacrifices reminded them of their sins year after year. **4** For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

John 14:6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them."

Galatians 3:28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians—you are one in Christ Jesus.