

**KNOWING YET NOT KNOWING:
The Irony of the Evangel in Romans 10**

Eko Onggosanusi

Abstract

Is Romans 10 simply an excursus on the need for evangelism and mission in the midst of Paul's "doctrine of predestination"? In this article, a chiasm is identified and utilized as a framework to further analyze Romans 10. It is demonstrated that the chiasm lends itself to accentuate the epistemological irony of Israel's response to the gospel. Despite the glory of the gospel that was proclaimed in the Hebrew Bible, the majority of the Jews in Paul's time remained in ignorance as they missed the hermeneutical key to understanding the Mosaic Law, namely, "Christ is the goal of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Rather than an excursus within Paul's doctrinal discourse, Romans 10 is the climax of the irony of Israel as the most privileged people who failed in their hearing and understanding.

Keywords: law, faith, righteousness, irony, gospel, unity, Romans, Romans 10, Paul, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah

Abstrak

Apakah Roma 10 hanyalah diskusi sampingan mengenai pentingnya penginjilan dan misi di dalam "doktrin predestinasi" Paulus? Di artikel ini, sebuah chiasmus diidentifikasi dan dipergunakan sebagai kerangka untuk menganalisa Roma 10 lebih lanjut. Di sini akan ditunjukkan bahwa chiasmus tersebut mempertajam ironi epistemologi akan respon Israel terhadap injil. Meskipun injil mulia tersebut telah diberitakan di dalam kitab suci orang Ibrani, mayoritas dari bangsa Yahudi yang hidup di dalam era Paulus mengabaikannya karena mereka tidak menangkap kunci hermeneutika untuk mengerti hukum Musa, yakni, "Kristus adalah tujuan dari hukum untuk kebenaran kepada setiap orang yang percaya." Lebih dari hanyalah sampingan di dalam pengulasan doktrinal Paulus, Roma 10 adalah

puncak ironi Israel sebagai bangsa istimewa yang gagal di dalam pendengaran dan pengertian mereka.

Kata-Kata Kunci: hukum, iman, kebenaran, ironi, injil, Roma, Roma 10, Paulus, Imamat, Ulangan, Yesaya.

Introduction – The Irony of Israel

The Jews of the first-century CE had waited for their messiah. Finally, Jesus of Nazareth came and claimed to be the one. They rejected and crucified him but God raised him from the dead. Even after his resurrection, many Jews still persisted in their rejection.

The story began when God called Abram to reverse the curse that Adam brought upon humankind. God bound himself to a covenant with Abram so that “all the clans of the earth” might be blessed in him (Gen 12:1-3). Abram’s faith in God’s faithfulness was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6, Rom 4:3). The fulfillment of this covenant first took place in the nation of Israel, God’s firstborn, who was delivered out of Egypt to serve God (Exod 4:22-23). The law (that is, the Mosaic Law or Torah) was given to Israel so that they might live as God’s holy nation. Yet Israel failed that mission and ended up in exile. In his faithfulness, God preserved a remnant (that is, the Jews) who returned to Jerusalem yet still lived under Gentile occupation.

So they expected the promised messiah to deliver them from the hands of Gentiles and to share their zeal for the letter of the law. Thus they rejected Jesus who was not a zealot for the law, showing compassion to sinners and Gentiles. Upon his departure, Jesus commissioned his disciples to be his witnesses. The good news of salvation in Jesus Christ was proclaimed in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisaic zealot who later became Paul the apostle to Gentiles (Rom 11:13), was chosen to proclaim the good news to the ends of the earth. As Gentiles were incorporated into the people of God, Paul wrote to the churches in Rome to raise support for his mission to Spain. Although the churches in Rome were well-known for their faith (Rom 1:8), Jewish-Gentile tension occurred among them. This tension threatened their unity especially in their support for Paul’s mission. The epistle of Romans was written partly to address this issue.¹

¹ The purpose of Romans can be found in, e.g. Robert Jewett and Roy David Kotansky, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007),

In Rom 1:16-17, Paul states that the gospel is the revelation of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*, that is, the covenant faithfulness of God.² The Jews were privileged by the law. Yet the Jews not only failed in keeping it, but also misused it as a means of boasting (Rom 3:1-2, 27-30). Paul says that such privilege had no bearing on righteousness. Since all are under sin yet justified by faith in Christ, no ethnic group has anything to boast over another (Rom 3:9-26). Moreover, as the death and resurrection of Christ have fulfilled and inaugurated the new covenant, the law is now written on the hearts of God's people in Christ (Rom 2:14-16; cf. Jer 31:31-33). Having been reconciled with God (Rom 5-6), nothing will be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39).

Despite the relative success of his Gentile missions, Paul grieved the persistent rejection of the gospel by his fellow countrymen (Rom 9:1-4). If God indeed revoked his covenant with Israel, the reputation of God's faithfulness and of Paul's gospel would be at stake. So Paul used the Old Testament scriptures to compose a defense for God's faithfulness. Romans 9-11 provides resolution to Rom 3:3-7, in that Paul finds that this rejection was a part of the recurring pattern in the redemptive history in which God preserved a remnant from his rebellious people. In addition, the partial hardening of many Jews allowed the *ingrafting* of many Gentiles into the olive tree of God's assembly.

While demonstrating God's sovereignty, Paul also maintained that many Jews were responsible for missing the interpretive key which caused them to falsely pursue the law of righteousness "not by faith, but as though by works" (Rom 9:30-33). So in relation to righteousness, the antithesis is not between the law and faith, but works and faith in relation to the law. The inherently righteous law is not the problem (Rom 3:31; 6:15; 7:7, 12); it was their manner of keeping the law as contrary to grace (cf. Rom 3:27, 4:2, 4:6, and 11:6).

It is in this immediate context, Paul gives his exposition on the gospel as recorded in Romans 10. But is this pericope simply an excursus on the gospel and mission in the midst of a discourse on divine election? What is the main theme of Romans 10 within the

80-90; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans 9-16*, ICC (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1975), 814-822.

²This is assumed throughout this article. Among those who also hold to this interpretation are Ben Witherington and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 51-54; James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 38A, Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 40-42; and N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 179.

wider context of the epistle? This essay attempts to address these two questions. In Section II below, an inherent chiastic structure of Romans 10 is identified and utilized to accentuate its theme: the irony of Israel's ignorance of the gospel of salvation. The gospel, along with its significance and implications, lies at the center of the chiasm, sandwiched by two seemingly contradictory statements: 1) the Jews did not know that the gospel was the fulfillment of the law, yet 2) the Jews actually knew and had heard of the gospel. These two statements are set forth as the irony of the gospel: it was known (in one sense) and yet unknown (in another sense) by the Jews. This finding is summarized in Section III, along with some concluding remarks.

Romans 10 – Proposed Structure and Exegesis

As a single literary unit, Rom 10 is composed of three interlocking parts that can be identified, as follows:

Act I, Rom 10:1-4 – the Jews do not know

Act II, Rom 10:5-15 – what the Jews do not know

- a. Rom 10:5-8 – the gospel as the fulfillment of the law
- b. Rom 10:9-13 – the glory of the gospel
- c. Rom 10:14-15 – the gospel fulfilled through mission

Act III, Rom 10:16-21 – yet the Jews actually do (hear and) know

Romans 10 evidently exhibits a chiasm, with Act II at the center. The antithetical parallelism between Acts I and III points to an irony that undergirds the construction of the pericope. In terms of overall chiastic structure, the connective *γάρ* is extensively used in Acts I and II, which signifies a rapid progression of argument. Such a string of arguments is recapitulated in verse 14 with *οὖν*. The exposition then switches to a diatribe in Act III. In addition to righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη*), the theme of believing (*πιστεύειν/πίστις*) appears frequently—as do verbal actions in relation to faith (*ῥήμα, κηρῦσσειν, ἐπικαλεῖσθαι, ὁμολογεῖν, ἀκούειν/ἀκοή*)—throughout Acts I and II.

A. Act I, Rom 10:1-4 – The Jews Do Not Know

Romans 10:1-4 can be translated as follows:

- 1 Brothers, the desire of my own heart and {my} prayer to God are indeed on behalf of them for salvation.
- 2 For I testify on their behalf that they have zeal for God, yet not according to knowledge:
- 3 Since they were ignorant of the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own [righteousness], they were not subject to the righteousness of God. {This is what they missed}:
- 4 For Christ is the goal/fulfillment (τέλος) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Paul pointed out that many Jews were ignorant about the righteousness of God. Unlike the Greco-Roman notion of righteousness, which is measured against an absolute moral code, the Old Testament conveys righteousness as relational and covenantal.³ As mentioned in Section I, God's righteousness is God's covenant faithfulness. By trusting upon it, a person is declared righteous before God. Thus, the covenant with God becomes the basis of humanity's righteousness, with the law given to be observed within a relational context.

But in their zeal to the letter of the law, many Jews in Paul's time departed from covenantal righteousness, as the law was absolutized into a code to establish their own righteousness. As a result, they missed the interpretive key to God's righteousness: Christ as the τέλος of the law. In this context, the possible meaning of τέλος in Rom 10:4 can be narrowed down to two candidates: end/cessation or goal/fulfillment. While fulfillment carries a sense of ending in some respect, termination does not necessarily carry any sense of fulfillment.⁴ Apart from Rom 10:4, τέλος is used 11 other times in

³ See, e.g. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub Co, 2006), 340–342; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 79–81; I. Howard Marshall et al., eds., *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1020–1021. Also Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10th ed., s.v. "δικαιος." (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub Co, 1977).

⁴ Examples of scholars who prefer 'end/termination' are James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 38B, Romans 9-16* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 590–591; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Paul's View of the Law in Romans 10:4-5," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 118–12. Those who opt for 'goal/fulfillment' are Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 75–77; Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law:*

Pauline (including Deutero-Pauline) epistles where ten of them exhibit a sense of fulfillment.⁵ Furthermore, we observe that Rom 10:4 is Paul's exegetical axiom, that is, his interpretive key for a fresh reading of the OT. This thus sets the stage for interpreting Rom 10:5-15. Therefore, such ignorance of this key exegetical axiom for understanding the law is related to a wrong pursuit of righteousness. In this sense, the Jews did not 'know.'

B. Act II-a, Rom 10:5-8 – What the Jews Do Not Know: The Gospel Fulfills the Law

Rom 10:5-8 can be translated as follows:

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law:
"The man who has done these shall live in them."⁶

6 And {about} the righteousness from faith, he says as follows:
"Do not say in your heart, 'Who shall go up into the heaven?'"
This means bringing Christ down.

7 "Or, 'Who shall go down into the abyss?'" This means bringing Christ up from the dead.

8 Instead, what does he say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" This means the word of faith that we preach.

Utilizing Rom 10:4 as his exegetical axiom, Paul sets forth a fresh reading of OT scriptures. To relate the law to faith, Lev 18:5 was quoted in Rom 10:5 with a slight change from LXX in the participle ποιήσας from adverbial to substantival. In Lev 18:5, Moses tasked the Israelites to keep the commandments concerning sexual purity, to set themselves apart from other nations around them.

A Contextual Approach: (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 205; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans 9-16*, 519; Jewett and Kotansky, *Romans*, 619–620; Wright, *Justification*, 244.

⁵ Two occurrences in Rom 13 (e.g., tax) are excluded. Other than 2 Cor 3:13, Rom 6:21-22 (2x); 1 Cor 1:8, 10:11, 15:24; 2 Cor 1:13, 11:15; Phil 3:19; 1 Thess 2:16; 1 Tim 1:5 (Deutero-Pauline) carry a sense of fulfillment. In addition, all the 13 occurrences (one in Rom 13 is excluded) of its cognates (τελεῖν, τελειοῦν, and τέλειος) are best interpreted as completion or fulfillment (Rom 2:27, 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6, 13:10, 14:20; 2 Cor 12:9; Gal 5:16; Phil 3:12,15; including Deutero-Pauline Eph 4:13; Col 1:28, 4:12; 2 Tim 4:7).

⁶ The strongest contender of textual variation (translated: *For Moses writes that the man who has done the righteousness by law shall live in it*) has a somewhat stronger Alexandrian witnesses but smoother/easier reading. The NA28 text is better attested to geographically and benefits from an older witness P46.

Hence, keeping the law was considered to be the way of life in a covenantal-nomistic sense. Yet this passage could also be interpreted as a way of attaining life through the law.⁷ However, when read together with Rom 10:4, this quotation of Lev 18:5 may be best understood as keeping the law written on the hearts of those who are in Christ. This is the way of life in the new covenant, which Paul also termed “the obedience of faith” (Rom 1:5; 16:26).

Next, a collation of texts from Deuteronomy is found in Rom 10:6-8. Deuteronomy contains repetitions and expansions of the law given at Mount Sinai. Yet here, the law, interpreted in light of Christ (Rom 10:4), testifies about righteousness from faith. This clarifies what Paul said earlier in Rom 3:21: the law is upheld, rather than abolished, through faith. To understand Paul’s use of the OT texts, Rom 10:6-8 is compared with its corresponding deuteronomistic texts in Table 1.

Table 1: Rom 10:6-8 compared with Deuteronomy. MT version is given when differences occur.

Romans 10	Deuteronomy (LXX and MT)
Q1 [6a] Μὴ εἶπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου,	[8:17] μὴ εἶπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου Ἡ ἰσχύς μου καὶ τὸ κράτος τῆς χειρὸς μου ἐποίησέν μοι τὴν δύναμιν τὴν μεγάλην ταύτην. פּוֹכַח לִבִּי [9:4] μὴ εἶπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ἐν τῷ ἐξαναλώσει κύριον τὸν θεόν σου τὰ ἔθνη ταῦτα ἀπὸ προσώπου σου λέγων Διὰ τὰς δικαιοσύνας μου εἰσήγαγέν με κύριος κληρονομήσει τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀγαθὴν ταύτην. פּוֹכַח לִבִּי

⁷ See, e.g. Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 119. Reception history of Lev 18:5 can be found in, e.g., Simon J. Gathercole, “Torah, Life, and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), 126–45. A number of Romans commentators interpret this quotation as a statement on the impossibility of keeping the law. However, such interpretation reads the requirement for perfectly keeping the law into the text. Such a requirement is absent in Romans as well as in other Pauline-related epistles.

Q2 [6b] Τίς ἀναβήσεται εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν;	[30:12] οὐκ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω ἐστὶν λέγων Τίς ἀναβήσεται ἡμῖν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ λήμψεται αὐτήν ἡμῖν; καὶ ἀκούσαντες αὐτήν ποιήσομεν.
Q3 [7] Τίς καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον;	[30:13] οὐδὲ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης ἐστὶν λέγων Τίς διαπεράσει ἡμῖν εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ λήμψεται ἡμῖν αὐτήν; ... ׀ַהּ רַבּוּ-לָא וְנִלְ-רַבּוּיּוּ מִי ...
Q4 [8] Ἐγγύς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου	[30:14] ἔστιν σου ἐγγύς τὸ ῥῆμα σφόδρα ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν ταῖς χερσίν σου αὐτὸ ποιεῖν.

How did Paul interpret those deuteronomistic texts? Deuteronomy 8:17 and 9:4 were warnings to Israel before entering the promised land. The expression “do not say in your heart”—in its negated aorist subjunctive form—is unique to these two passages in the entire LXX (with Deut 18:21 being the closest, without the negation). It should be noted, however, that the MT version of Deut 8:17 does not appear in a negated form (תַּרְמַא instead of תַּרְמַא-לָא as in Deut 9:4).

Concerning Rom 10:6-8, the clause “do not say in your heart” only occurs once in all of the Pauline (including Deutero-Pauline) epistles. Based on the uniqueness of this expression, it is reasonable to treat Rom 10:6a as a quotation. Employing a partial quotation to invoke the meaning of a larger textual unit is a common practice in rabbinic exegesis; thus it is quite likely that Paul intended to remind his readers of Israel’s history. Israel had been warned not to be presumptuous, as if they had attained the inheritance due to their own strength and might. The inhabitants of the land would be destroyed and expelled because of their ungodliness, and Israel would inherit the land due to God’s covenant with their fathers. If they were unfaithful to Yahweh their God, they too would perish. So in Q1, the theme of God’s righteousness (i.e., covenant faithfulness)—as the source of blessing for weak, unrighteous, and stiff-necked people, as well as a prohibition against self-boasting—sets the stage for the deuteronomic quotation to follow.

The next block of texts (Q2, Q3, and Q4) comes in the context of the covenant renewal in Moab where the Israelites were warned against the curses that would befall them if they broke the covenant. As evident from Deut 30:1-10, this warning was also meant to be read as prophetic. While Deuteronomy itself forecast their failure, it called them to repentance. When that happens, God would *circumcise their heart* so that they might love and obey God with all their heart and soul. This statement is rendered in future tense.⁸ The discourse is continued in Deut 30:11-14, as follows: God's commandment is neither burdensome nor far, but instead is near them *in their heart, mouth, and hands*. Circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6) and the law written on the heart (Deut 30:14) are themes also echoed in LXX Jer 38:31-33, as the promise of the new covenant. Therefore, Paul's OT quotations in Rom 10:5-8 can be read in the context of the new covenant.

Paul's use of Deut 30:12-14 was not unique in Second Temple Judaism. For instance, *Baruch* (3:29-30) and Philo (*De Posteritate Caini*, 84-85) interpreted this commandment as the personification of Wisdom. Later, *Targum Neofiti* perceived both Moses as the one who ascended into heaven to bring down the law and Jonah as the one who descended into "the depth of the Great Sea" to bring up the law.⁹ Analogous to the interpretive tradition of his contemporaries, Paul interpreted the descent of the law as the incarnation of Christ and the ascent of the law as the resurrection of Christ. Evidently, this interpretation was a product of his exegetical axiom in Rom 10:4. As those Christ-events were divinely initiated and proclaimed in the word of faith (that is, the gospel), it was near in the mouth and heart of the hearers/readers. Note that Paul used a passage on the giving of the law to attest to righteousness by faith on the giving of the gospel.

How does Paul adapt the LXX deuteronomic texts in his quotations? Paul changed *διαπεράσει ἡμῖν εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης* to *καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον*, and removed all the three references to *works*. The first change in Rom 10:7 might have been intended to add a literary polish, since, unlike *θαλάσσης*, *ἄβυσσον* rhymes with *οὐρανόν* just as *καταγαγεῖν* with *ἀναγαγεῖν*. In its

⁸ Note that LXX uses *περικαθαριεῖ* ("he will clean away," per Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Hendrickson Pub, 2008) ; "he will purge entirely," per Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon: With a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)). However, MT uses *לְמַד* ("he will circumcise," per Ludwig Köhler and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001), 555).

⁹ Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 38B, Romans 9-16*, 604–606.

original context, crossing the sea might have been an allusion to the fruitless quest of Gilgamesh in the Gilgamesh Epic.¹⁰ Paul enhanced the fruitless-quest theme with a vertical contrast between the heaven and the abyss – the realm of the dead which is often associated with the depth of the ocean (cf. LXX Ps 70:20). This vertical contrast is similar to the one employed in *Targum Neofiti*.

The removal of the three references to *works* in Rom 10:6b-8 can be explained in either of the following ways:

1. Paul “rewrote” (radically changed the meaning of) Deut 30:12-14 by using the language of the law to *speak against* doing the law. This presupposes law-faith as well as law-gospel antithesis.¹¹ The “law in the heart” in Deut 30:14 is substituted with the gospel.
2. As the giving of the law has been fulfilled in Christ’s incarnation and resurrection, Paul highlights parts of the LXX text that signify those Christ-events. At the same time, Paul removes the reference to *works* in Rom 10:6-8 according to the faith-works (not law-gospel) antithesis in Rom 9:32. *Works* is now perceived as it was intended, that is, as an expression of obedience of faith in the Spirit as expressed in Rom 10:5.

The first choice reads the law-gospel antithesis into the text and results in an antagonistic relationship between the original intent of the OT texts and Paul’s second reading. The second alternative, on the other hand, allows some continuity and discontinuity between the two referents of the texts. Along with Paul’s quotation of Lev 18:5 in Rom 10:5, the second alternative allows us to see that the ‘christotelic’ understanding of righteousness by faith is *in harmony* with righteousness by law.¹² In this case, Rom 10:6-8 complements Rom 10:5, where Rom 10:5-8 is a continuation of Rom 10:4 and Rom 10:4-8 is contrasted to Rom 10:1-3.

Presupposing that Christ is the fulfillment of the law, Paul arrived at a fuller meaning of the two nomistic texts: Lev 18:5 and Deut 30:11-14. But how does Paul’s use of Deut 30:11-14 enhance the rhetoric of the pericope? First, by taking a commonly adapted Deuteronomic text and applying his *christotelic* presupposition, Paul

¹⁰ See, e.g. Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy (NICOT)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 365.

¹¹ Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2004), 339–341; Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 179–183.

¹² Analysis on the use of γάρ...δέ... construction in Romans does not favor any option. Rather than adversarial, we interpret the particle δέ in Rom 10:6 as complementary from the overall context of the pericope.

showed that the incarnation and resurrection of Christ had fulfilled the giving of the law and surpassed other events that could have been perceived as its fulfillment. As a result, the “law of Christ” has been written on the heart of everyone who is in Christ so that it may be observed “at ease.” Second, the nearness of the law highlights the *irony* of Israel. Christ, the fulfillment of the law, was present among them and proclaimed the gospel with authority and power. Yet in the hardness of heart many Jews ignored this due to their lack of knowledge.

C. Act II-b, Rom 10:9-13 – What the Jews Do Not Know: The Glory of the Gospel

Rom 10:9-13 can be translated, as follows:

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

10 For with the heart it is believed for righteousness and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. {In fact, this is anticipated in our Scriptures}

11 For the Scripture says:

Everyone “who believes upon him shall not be put to shame.”

12 See, there is no difference between Jew and Greek, since he {Jesus} is the Lord of all, richly generous to all who call upon him.

13 Because “whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”

Continuing from the word of faith that is in mouth and heart, Paul expanded the action of mouth and heart to confessing and believing as integral parts of the faith in Christ (Rom 10:9-10). We note that the parallelism between the first and the second clauses (a second person singular aorist subjunctive followed by ἐν+dative as forming a third-class conditional protasis), as well as between the fourth and the fifth (an instrumental dative followed by a third person singular present indicative and εἰς+accusative). A chiasm (ABCBA’) is also apparent with the third clause (σωθήσῃ) at the center. This highlights the centrality of both the lordship of Jesus and his resurrection in the gospel of salvation and the Christian faith.

How do mouth and heart work together in faith? As καρδιά is the “centre of the inner life of man and the source or seat of all the

forces and functions of soul and spirit”¹³, Christ-faith is pervasive inwardly and expressive outwardly. For early Christians, confessing κύριος Ἰησοῦς was offensive to unbelieving Jews and Romans. The word κύριος is used more than 6000 times in LXX to translate יהוה. Hence, to the majority of the Jews, early Christians are guilty of blasphemy, as they were perceived to include Jesus in the identity of the one God of Israel.¹⁴ In addition, κύριος was a title that was used by Roman Emperors. Yet the lordship of Jesus was vindicated upon his resurrection. This is an essential component of the law written in our hearts and the boundary marker for those who are in Christ.

Having established his gospel from the Pentateuch in Rom 10:9-10, Paul quoted from the Prophets in Rom 10:11-13 to accentuate the ethnic *universality* of the gospel invitation (cf. Rom 1:16, Rom 3:21-24, Rom 10:4). Stated in a sequence of four indicatives, the first and fourth indicatives are taken from Isa 28:16 and Joel 3:5, respectively. The second and third indicatives (v.12) – sandwiched between the two LXX quotations – enforce the use of πᾶς in verses 11 and 13, asserting that there is no difference between Jew and Greek, since Jesus is the Lord of all.

The original context of Isa 28:16 is Yahweh’s promise of Israel’s eschatological restoration in Zion. The change from οὐ μὴ καταισχυθῆῖ (emphatic negation subjunctive in LXX) to οὐ καταισχυθήσεται (future in quotation), if intentional, was perhaps intended to match σωθήσεται in verse 13, which happens to carry a more eschatological tone. In Joel 3:5, σωθήσεται is used to translate the *niphal* imperfect of שׁלַח, which can be rendered as ‘to escape.’ In Paul’s quotation, the two future passive indicative verbs may be intended to be synonymous. Those who are saved from God’s wrath on judgment day will be vindicated and hence will not be put to shame.

The original context of Joel 3:5 is the promised outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Yahweh when he will bring salvation and restoration to Jerusalem, as they turn back to him by calling upon his name. Attention should be given to ἐπικαλεῖσθαι, which is used to translate the *qal* of קָרָא. With an accusative object, ἐπικαλεῖσθαι is a verb of appeal in prayer to a deity in one’s favor, signifying a total

¹³ Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "καρδια."

¹⁴ See, e.g. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans 9-16*, 526–529.

dependence upon the mercy of the deity.¹⁵ In the OT context, believing and calling upon the name are addressed exclusively to Yahweh. When Paul quoted those passages, however, he assigned the object of faith and appeal to Jesus (Rom 10:10-13; cf. 1 Cor 1:2). As Christ is perceived to share the divine identity of Yahweh, an act of faith and appeal to Christ is also attributed toward Yahweh. Hence, calling upon the name of Christ is an act of faith toward God.

Therefore, Rom 10:11-13 further expands the gospel definition given in Rom 10:9-10 by demonstrating, first, that both Moses and the Prophets anticipated the gospel of Christ, provided they are interpreted in a *christotelic* manner. In addition, Rom 10:11-13 highlights the universal scope of the gospel, since Christ is the Lord of all, just as there is only one God “who will justify both circumcision and uncircumcision by faith” (Rom 3:29-30).

To summarize, Rom 10:9-13 proclaims that, just as Christ’s resurrection brings an eschatological reality into the present, so our present faith in and confession of the resurrected Lord secure our future vindication and, likewise, bring our eschatological salvation into the present. Indeed, the word of faith is in the mouth and heart of those who are in Christ. This is the glorious fulfillment of the law as testified by the law and the Prophets (Rom 3:21).

D. Act II-c, Rom 10:14-15 – What the Jews Do Not Know: The Gospel Mission

Unlike other parts of Rom 10, almost all speech acts in Rom 10:5-13 are directed to a second person addressee. Such a shift in Paul’s locution from the third to the second person, and later back to the third person, may serve to amplify his invitation to the readers into faith (Rom 10:5-13) and mission mindedness (Rom 10:14-15).

After laboring in the exposition of the gospel of Christ and proclaiming both Christ as fulfillment of the law and the universality of the gospel’s call, Paul explains to his readers why his gospel mission was necessary as a means of fulfilling this universal gospel proclamation. Romans 10:14-15 can be translated as follows:

14 Therefore, how could they call upon the one whom they
 have not believed?

¹⁵ Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "καλεω."

How could they believe the one whom they
have not heard?

How could they hear without someone
preaching?

And {finally}, **15** how could they preach unless they are
commissioned?

Just as it is written: “How pleasant are the feet of those who
proclaim the good news!”¹⁶

In Rom 10:14-15, Paul used a sequence of four deliberative subjunctives to reason backward from the act of calling upon, to believing, hearing, preaching, and commissioning. This sequence, in addition to its deliberative force, also carries two additional principles. First, a missionary is commissioned to preach the gospel of Christ so that people may hear it. Since Paul’s commissioning came from Christ (cf. Gal 1:1), it warranted him to request missional support from the church in Rome (Rom 15:23-24). Second, in verse 14 (πῶς δὲ πιστεύσωσιν οὗ οὐκ ἤκουσαν);), a genitive relative pronoun is used as the genitive object of ἀκούειν. This indicates hearing a person *directly*, rather than merely hearing *about* a person.¹⁷ Hence, the preaching of the gospel by the evangelist carries the authority of Christ himself, as if Christ himself preached. Therefore, Paul’s request for missional support from his readers was grounded upon his conviction that in his own gospel proclamation Christ’s authoritative preaching was manifest.

After logically reasoning from the act of faith to the need for commissioning, Paul provides scriptural support for his evangelistic effort by quoting Isa 52:7. There in its original context, God promised the good news of peace, goodness, and salvation, which he himself would bring. It climaxes in the recognition from all nations that “Your God reigns” (v.7). God would vindicate his people and his own lordship among all nations.¹⁸ He promised that he would return to Zion to restore Jerusalem and that all nations would see the salvation of the God of Israel (Isa 52:8-10). Then from Isa 52:13, the

¹⁶ A contender of textual variation (translated: *how beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim peace, who preach the good news*) is better testified geographically, susceptible to haplography, yet closer to LXX (possible harmonization). NA28 rendering is testified by stronger and older Alexandrian witnesses.

¹⁷ Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk, Revised (University Of Chicago Press, 1961), para. 173; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans 9-16*, 533; Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 38B, Romans 9-16*, 620.

¹⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66 (NICOT)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 368.

focus shifts to the Servant of God (עבד־יהוה) until the end of Isa 53 where the Servant was portrayed as the evangelist (Isa 53:1).

Within Paul's truncated quotation of Isa 52:7, two major adaptations are apparent from LXX: replacing ὥρα ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων (an hour upon the mountains) with ὠραῖοι (pleasant or timely) and replacing singular participle εὐαγγελιζομένου with plural participle εὐαγγελιζομένων. The first change draws the meaning closer to the MT version as the *qal* of נאח, rendered to mean 'to be pleasing' while still maintaining a sense of timeliness. The second change shifts the subject from a single person (God, through the Servant) to a plurality of evangelists. This most likely refers to the apostles, and other early church evangelists in general, through whom Christ himself preached and was heard (Rom 10:14).

How does this contribute to Paul's overall argument? Although Isa 52:7 was understood to be an eschatological event in Second Temple Judaism, Paul argues that its fulfillment has come in Christ. Christ the Servant had come to preach the good news and passed the torch to his disciples. By applying Isa 52:7 to evangelism, Paul argues that the promise of Israel's restoration and God's vindication before all nations was being fulfilled through the success of his missions. Paul further elaborated this claim in Rom 11 (which is not within the scope of this article). This claim, together with the sequence of four subjunctives, was intended to demonstrate the necessity of Paul's mission as a fulfillment of the Deutero-Isaianic gospel.

E. Act III, Rom 10:16-21 – Yet the Jews Actually 'Know'

Romans 10:16-21 can be translated as follows:

16 But not all obeyed the good news. For Isaiah says: "Lord, who has believed our message?"

17 Therefore, the faith is from hearing, and the hearing through {the} word of Christ.¹⁹

18 But {then, for the sake of argument} I say: Is it so that they {those Jews} have not heard? No, far from it: "To all the earth their voice has gone out, and to the end of the world their words!"

19 But {wait, for the sake of argument} I say: Is it so that Israel did not know? {No, they knew!} First Moses says: "I will

¹⁹ Textual variation: "word of God," weaker witnesses (Majority Text+**8** vs. **8**+B+P46+Latin), no significant impact in meaning since the gospel of Christ is equated with the gospel of God in Romans.

provoke you to jealousy with non-nation, with foolish nation I will anger you.”

20 Then Isaiah is bold and says: “I was found among those {non-nations} who did not seek me. I became visible to those who did not ask for me.”

21 And to Israel he says: “For the whole day I have stretched out my hands to a {persistently} disobedient and opposing people.”

While Act II ended with a high note, Act III completed Paul’s lamentation of the irony of Israel in Act I. First, by quoting Isa 53:1 in Rom 10:16 Paul states an obvious fact, namely, that not all obeyed the gospel. In the original context, the Isaianic writer expressed his doubt in the appeal of the good news on account of the unattractiveness of the עבד־יהוה. As Paul applied this quotation to himself (and perhaps also to Christ), he reflects upon the rejection of the gospel, especially by many Jews. Here, Rom 10:17 serves as a prelude to the subsequent *diatribe* in Rom 16:18-21, where the effectiveness of his mission was put into question.

Paul started by stating that hearing is *necessary* for faith (Rom 10:17, repeating 10:14). But in the form of a rhetorical question (‘μὴ οὐ + indicative’ expects a negative answer), Rom 10:18 points out that hearing alone is *insufficient* for faith. That is, if faith indeed comes from hearing the word of Christ but many Jews did not believe, is it possible that they had not heard? Paul denies this by stating that the gospel had been proclaimed “to the end of the world.” Here, Paul uses the language of LXX Ps 18:5. He argues by metaphorical analogy from the inexcusability of unbelieving Gentiles by the universal perspicuity of creation to that of unbelieving Jews by the universal proclamation of the gospel (which was reasonably widespread in Paul’s time).²⁰ Hence, lack of gospel proclamation was not the reason for unbelief, because those Jews must have heard.

It is worth noting that the irony of the lexical similarity between ἤκουσαν in Rom 10:18 and ὑπήκουσαν in Rom 10:16, just as the *gal* of עָשָׂה can mean either hearing or obeying. Hearing was considered a virtue in Judaism, as also evident from Yahweh’s demand from Israel to *hear* him especially in Deuteronomy and the Prophets.²¹ Yet

²⁰ Some argue that this is a reference to Rom 1:19-20, that is, the knowledge of God as general revelation, e.g. D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Baker Academic, 2007), 663. Yet such interpretation forcefully applies the original meaning of the psalm to Rom 10:18.

²¹ See, e.g. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 97; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 123.

this is the second time in Romans Paul has used this perceived virtue against the Jews. Jews who were hearers but not doers of the law (Rom 2:13) were indeed comparable to those who heard the gospel but did not obey its calling.

Another rhetorical question is found in Rom 10:19-21. If they had heard, is it possible that they did not know? Paul denies this assertion by quoting from the Law and the Prophets. The first quotation is taken from Deut 32:21. In its original context, Moses warned the Israelites against idolatry: if they provoked Yahweh into jealousy with the no-gods, Yahweh would provoke them into jealousy with those who were not his people. Eventually the curse was fulfilled, through the military conquests of the surrounding Gentiles. This culminated in the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, by the Assyrians and the exile of Judah the Southern Kingdom to Babylon. With his *christotelic* presupposition, Paul finds the fulfillment of this passage in the unbelief of many Jews. This also anticipates his later reflection on the partial hardening of Israel which Paul further discusses in Rom 11. There Paul posits that rather than Gentile military conquest against Israel (the original context of Deut 32:21), the *ingrafting* of the multitude of the Gentiles would provoke many Jews into jealousy and might somehow facilitate their repentance.

The next quotation comes from Isa 65:1-2, which in its original context recounted God's longsuffering for the idolatrous pre-exilic Israel.²² In the parallelism of Isa 65:1, the aorist passive εὐρέθην and middle ἐμφανῆς ἐγενόμην are used to translate the *tolerative niphals* of נצמ and שׂרד which can be rendered as 'to let myself be found' and 'to let myself be sought', respectively. That is, God made himself available before any Israelite sought or asked for him.²³ In addition, Paul attributes Isa 65:1 to the believing Gentiles and Isa 65:2 to the unbelieving Jews. This is apparent from the pre-quotation introductions: the use of ἀποτολμᾶ (Rom 10:20) and πρὸς τὸν Ἰσραὴλ (Rom 10:21). So Paul uses Isa 65:1-2 (initially addressed to Israel) to contrast two different ethnic groups in light of their responses to the gospel. At the same time, God, in his sovereignty, let himself be found by Gentiles but also retained his longsuffering for unbelieving Jews. This further leads to Paul's vision of the restoration of Israel in Rom 11.

²² The LXX version closely parallels the MT, apart from a transposition between the 2 verbal predicates in the 2 sentences of Isa 65:1. As Paul's quotation performs the same transposition to the LXX version, Rom 10:20 is closer to the MT except for the ordering of the two sentences. This does not change the meaning.

²³ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (NICOT), 236.

So in Rom 10:17-21, Paul states that hearing and knowing the gospel do not necessarily result in obedience. In the case of Israel, they heard and knew the gospel, yet did not submit to it, thereby missing God's righteousness in Christ. Yet multitudes of Gentiles received the gospel and found such righteousness. In light of Christ, Paul argues that the OT scriptures were fulfilled in all these events. Thus was the tragedy of Israel, the most privileged yet hardened people.

F. Act I, II, and III: Israel's Epistemological Irony Highlighted

In Act I (Rom 10:2-3), Paul claims that many Jews sought to establish their own righteousness, since they were *ignorant* and that their zeal for God was not according to *knowledge*. But in Act III (Rom 10:19-21) Paul argues that such Jews *knew* the gospel. This paradoxical tension can be resolved by recalling their privileges as God's firstborn, entrusted with the oracles of God and the law (Exod 4:22-23; Rom 3:2, 9:4). Paul has built his case by quoting from the Law and the Prophets, two divisions in the Hebrew Bible of his time. So, *those Jews should have 'known'*.

Despite such privileged status, the Jews in Paul's time *ignored* the exegetical axiom required to interpret the law of righteousness, that is, Christ as the law's fulfillment.²⁴ So this inner tension further accentuates the irony of Israel: the chosen people, trapped in a misguided quest for righteousness. They missed Christ who was before their eyes all along. *They knew, yet they did not. They heard, yet did not obey.* In Paul's *christotelic* reading, however, such rejection was in fact anticipated in the OT scriptures. But Paul firmly holds that in the faithlessness of the Jews, God is faithful to his covenant. God was in the process of restoring them while also allowing other nations to become children and heirs. This was accomplished, as the gospel was being proclaimed throughout the world. As many people from all nations are *ingrafted* into God's olive tree (cf. Rom 11), Paul envisions the beginning of the restoration of Israel. So the gospel mission is a realized eschatology and hence necessary, not despite the unbelief of many Jews, but precisely because of it.

²⁴ Similar insight is also given in Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 668–669.

Conclusion

The inherent chiasm in Rom 10 enhances the irony of Israel's unbelief, as follows: Act I tells the readers that Israel did not know the true righteousness of God. But Act III clearly speaks about Israel's hearing and knowing the gospel yet rejecting it. The irony of knowing yet not knowing is further intensified in Act II, which lies at the center of the chiasm. Positioned at the center of the antithetical parallelism, and sandwiched between Acts I and III, is the nature of the Deutero-Isaianic gospel – the universal gospel of salvation in Christ, who fulfills the law and unites God's people throughout the world. The gospel is so glorious that it demands a proclaiming mission to the entire world, so that nations of the world may, in turn, proclaim that "Your God shall reign!" (cf. Rom 10:7).

Despite its glory, however, the gospel of Jesus Christ will be rejected as well. Ironically, this rejection was most evident among the majority of the Jews, that is, the remnant of ethnic Israel. This rejection was foreseen in the OT scriptures and, paradoxically, a part of the divine mystery of Israel's own restoration. For this paradoxical reason, Paul insists that the gospel must still be proclaimed worldwide. So rejection must not stop proclamation, but instead fuels it.

Therefore, Rom 10 is not merely an excursus on evangelism that balances a seemingly predestinarian discourse of Rom 9-11. It is rather the *climax of the irony* of Israel's unbelief, which finds its unexpected resolution in Rom 11. That is, Rom 10, as situated in the entire epistle, anticipates a theodicy for God's continuing faithfulness to his covenant despite the rejection of the gospel of salvation by the majority of the Jews. This was written in the formative period of the universal Christian church consisting of the Jews (albeit smaller in number compared to the Gentile Christians) and the Gentiles who confessed the lordship and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 10:9).

How does Rom 10 speak to the Christian church today? In the era of modern evangelicalism, the gospel is perceived primarily as a transaction between faith and eternal life. This transaction is sealed by reciting a sinner's prayer derived from a detached reading of Rom 10:9. An informed reading of Rom 10, however, shows that this passage is packed with a warning: the irony of Israel—who was privileged with knowledge of scriptures yet failed to believe due to their ignorance and disobedience.

In addition to motivating his readers in Rome to support his mission to Spain, Paul warns all his readers against repeating the failure of Israel. Throughout the epistle, Paul has consistently taught

that there was no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles who called upon the name of the Lord (Rom 10:11-13). Such a perspective on equality was instrumental in preserving the unity of God's people. This went against the nationalistic zeal for the law, perceived as Jewish superiority over other nations. This attitude had not only led to division, but also became a stumbling block for the majority of the Jews (Rom 9:30-33). As a result, they ended up rejecting the gospel of salvation because they were trapped in a misguided quest for righteousness.

While the purity of the gospel cannot be compromised, do Christians boastfully draw superficial boundary markers against one another? Is it possible that many are trapped in some boastful quests for man-made righteousness? Although the diversity of Christian traditions and views should be treasured, unity in the mission to bring God's kingdom on earth is urgently needed today – especially in places where Christians are considered a minority, as in first-century Rome. This unity in diversity may be achieved if we “accept one another just as Christ has accepted us for the glory of God” (Rom 15:7).

About the Author

Eko Onggosanusi (Eko Ong) is a Master of Divinity student at the Redeemer Seminary Dallas (expected graduation: May 2015). His main interest and desire for further study are in biblical studies especially the New Testament. Currently a caretaker of an Indonesian fellowship in Dallas and serving in the Anglican community, he also holds a doctoral degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (granted in December 2000) and is currently a director at Samsung Research America-Dallas.

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