

## Romans 10:14-21

### *What God Does with Defiant People*

**Main idea:** We have all been disobedient and defiant to God, and yet He opens His hands to us, always inviting us to believe.

A poor farmer went to his banker and said, "I've got some good news and some bad news. Which one do you want to hear first?"

The banker replied, "Well let's get the bad news over with first." So the farmer said, "Ok, I need to let you know that I've had a bad year and I can't pay the mortgage I owe you on my house. And since it was such a bad year, I also can't repay any of the money I borrowed for my new machinery either, nor can I pay off any of the money for the loan I got for the seeds and fertilizer last year either."

Pretty disgruntled that the farmer would default on his loans, the banker said, "That's some pretty bad news. So, what's the good news?"

The farmer said, "The good news is that I still intend to do business with you."

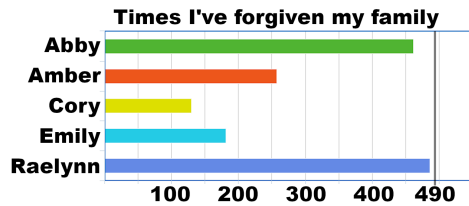
How many chances should you give people? And if they're guilty of sinning against you, how many times should you forgive them?

Jesus and Peter had a conversation about this that went like this:

"Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?" "I tell you, not as many as seven," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22)

So, we need to forgive a person up to 490 times! And I don't know about you, but I'm keeping track!

## [Picture of Forgiveness Chart]



And some people are getting close to number 491!

Is that how we're to forgive or not forgive others? Based on a record of wrongs? No, of course not.<sup>1</sup> Jesus was saying that we should be willing to forgive people as many times as it takes. Love keeps no record of wrongs. And we're called to love even our enemies.<sup>2</sup>

So if that's the attitude that we're to have toward our enemies, what attitude does God have toward us?<sup>3</sup> How many chances does God give us, who have disobeyed Him far more than 490 times? In other words, what does God do with defiant people, and what about all the nations who defy God who have never even heard the name of Jesus?

Romans 10:14-17

How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ. (Romans 10:14-17)

<sup>1</sup> It's certainly not how God forgives. 1 Corinthians 13:5

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:44

<sup>3</sup> God loved us, even when we were deserving of His wrath. Ephesians 2:1-5

*Father, help us to be those who bring good news to those who have not yet believed, speaking the message about Christ to a defiant world. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

In 2018, Ashley Despain was visiting an inmate at a local jail in Missouri. During the visit, she asked if she could give the inmate a Bible. And if I stopped the story there, you would think that Ashley Despain was doing a good thing. But when the Bible was inspected by the jail officials, she was arrested and charged with a Class D felony, because hidden inside the binding of the Bible was meth and marijuana.<sup>4</sup>

Well, God tells us to share His word with others,<sup>5</sup> but not like that.

All the way back in Romans chapter 1, we read this in verses 5 and 6.

Through him [talking about Jesus] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles, including you who are also called by Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:5-6)

So Paul stated in the very beginning of his letter to the Romans that due to the grace of God, as an apostle, his mission from God was to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, which included the Romans, who he was writing to.

And that's our mission as well. It's part of the Great Commission. Jesus gave us this mission in Matthew 28:19-20.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

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<sup>4</sup> <https://fox4kc.com/news/missouri-woman-charged-after-allegedly-trying-to-sneak-drugs-hidden-in-bible-into-county-jail/>

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 4:2

As we share the gospel, as we make disciples of all nations, we're to teach the new disciples of all nations to observe, or obey, everything that Jesus Himself commanded us. Or, as Paul put it, "to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations."

But now, in Romans 10:16, we read that not all have obeyed the gospel. And this is obvious to us, right? We look around the world, and we clearly see that not everyone is obedient to God. We're reminded all the time about how ungodly our world is. We see nations that imprison and even kill people just for being Christians. We see mass murders take place in our own country in churches and schools. And we're definitely aware of how so many people refuse to place their faith in and worship Jesus.

So God commanded Paul and us to bring about the obedience of the nations, and yet it doesn't seem like all the world is or even will be obedient. So did God give Paul and us a mission that we would certainly fail to accomplish?

But what makes this even more confusing is that in this passage, Paul wasn't talking about the nations of people who are obviously disobedient to God, but rather about those that we would say look like they are obedient to God, the Jews. Look back at the beginning of the chapter. Verse 1.

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them [the Jews] is for their salvation. I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. (Romans 10:1-2)

So Paul is saying that the Jews clearly have a zeal for God, and yet he also then prayed for their salvation. They had a strong desire to obey God, and glorify God, obeying His word, but they didn't see who the word pointed them to.

And I find a lot of Christians are in much the same position today. There are a ton of Christians who are passionate about obeying the Bible, and they're passionate about proclaiming the morality of the Bible to our culture, and they want to bring about the obedience of the nations, and yet fail to point to the One Person who can truly bring about the obedience of the nations by His power and grace, who is Jesus.

More than anything else, we need to be people who tell others about Jesus.<sup>6</sup> More than we preach politics. More than complaining about all the things that we're against. More than we boycott businesses because of their agendas. We need to be sharing the grace of God that's only available through faith in Jesus. Because there's no other name under heaven through which we must be saved.<sup>7</sup> Salvation is only through hearing and responding to the good news.<sup>8</sup>

Verse 18.

But I ask, "Did they not hear?" Yes, they did: Their voice has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world. (Romans 10:18)

Which is interesting, because I often hear Christians say that in order for the end to come, the gospel first needs to be preached to all nations according to what Jesus said in Matthew 24:14.

This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

And yet, in our passage today, Paul seems to say that the gospel has already been proclaimed in all the world. In fact, Paul was quoting Psalm 19:4, which King David wrote around 1,000 BC. So even before Jesus said

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>7</sup> Acts 4:12

<sup>8</sup> John 14:6, Acts 16:30-33

that the good news would be proclaimed in all the world, the Jews already sang that the gospel had gone out to the whole world, almost like before Jesus even came, the end had already come!

You see, Jesus is the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world.<sup>9</sup> God is outside of time as we know it. Which means that Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,<sup>10</sup> and we're all kind of stuck trying to figure out the inbetween!

Like, will Jesus return before, after, or in the middle of the Tribulation? And will Jesus return for His Church before His 1,000 reign on the earth, or after that, or is the millennial reign just symbolic? And all of these questions are great for Bible study, but if you focus on them too much, they're kind of missing the point. I truly believe that genuine Christians can come to different conclusions about a lot of these things, but the point of the Bible isn't these things, but that we know Jesus!<sup>11</sup>

You see, Israel was so focused on good things, like obeying the law, that they often missed the most important things, like resting in God.<sup>12</sup> They believed in God, and were zealous to obey Him, but they largely failed to rest in Him alone for salvation.

Verse 19.

But I ask, "Did Israel not understand?" First, Moses said, I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that lacks understanding. And Isaiah says boldly, I was found by those who were not looking for me; I revealed myself to those who were not asking for me. But to Israel he says, All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and defiant people. (Romans 10:19-21)

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<sup>9</sup> Revelation 13:8

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 1:8

<sup>11</sup> John 17:3

<sup>12</sup> John 5:39

If you've ever had a disobedient child, you know how God feels. When your child is defiant, do you start counting down how many chances they have left? Are you like, "Okay, you have 489 chances left. 488. 487." And then a couple years later, or for some of your kids, a couple hours later, you tell them, "Okay, this is your last chance! You've used up 489 chances, so this is it! You get just one more chance, and after that, I'm cutting you off!" Do you say that?

Maybe. You probably don't count down from 490, but at some point, you may have to cut them off. I mean, that's what an intervention is, isn't it? In the most extreme interventions, out of love for the person, if a person is so addicted to drugs, alcohol, or something else, everyone who cares for that person comes together to let them know that they have to choose either drugs, or them. To the person struggling with addiction, this seems like wrath. It seems like hate. But it's truly done out of love, so that they would repent and change. But if they don't choose life, then they've chosen to be cut off.

As C.S. Lewis wrote:

"The doors of hell are locked on the inside." - C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

So God did an intervention with Israel, and they chose to be cut off. But because they chose to be cut off, God invited the nations in order to make Israel jealous. God says in Isaiah, "I was found by those who were not looking for me." That's us! That's the Gentiles. We were going our own way, doing our own thing, and out of His abundant love and mercy, He showed us grace.

And yet, even after an intervention, you would still love your child, right? And you would still invite your child to change. And you would never give up on them. God says of Israel, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and defiant people."

This is what God does with a defiant people. He continues to hold His hands out to them. Even while they curse Him, He stands with open arms. Even while they choose hell over Him, He invites them back.

God still holds His hands out to them. And He holds His hands out to you. Maybe you've been grasping onto a particular sin, and it's getting in the way of your relationship with God. You know it's wrong, but you just haven't been able to let it go. God is holding His hands out to you even now, inviting you to let go of all that's truly harming you, so that He can receive you back as the prodigal son.

In August 2019, Chase Bank did something that was unthinkable for its Canadian credit cardholders.<sup>13</sup> Chase Bank had decided that they no longer wanted to have part of the market of credit cards in Canada, so rather than slowly backing out of the market, they instantly forgave the debts of all their Canadian credit cardholders. Overnight, many Canadians went from being thousands of dollars in debt, to being completely debt free.

Listen, the reality for us is so much greater! Our sin against God is so great that we could never pay it off. And yet, God cancels our debt because Jesus paid the debt for us. Believe it, and rest in the grace of God.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/09/chase-bank-cancels-all-credit-card-debt-for-canadian-customers>