

The Mystery of Israel's Unbelief (9:30–10:21)

Why has Israel rejected the gospel about Christ? This is the question that drives Paul's argumentation in 9:30–10:21. Contrary to a common interpretation of this section, I will argue that Paul's aim is not to demonstrate Israel's culpability but to find the reason for its persistent unbelief.¹ While in 9:6–29 the focus was on divine purposes and election, it now shifts to human agents: gentiles, Israel, believers, and messengers of good news.² After their absence in 9:6–29, Christ and the gospel are re-introduced into the argumentation, and Paul returns to the language of πίστις and δικαιοσύνη (1:16–17, 4:1–25).

In 9:30–10:21 there are 14 quotations from scriptures.³ At the end of this section Paul's own words are limited only to brief introduction formulae in the catena that concludes the argumentative entity. Already the sheer number of quotations suggests that they have an important function in shaping the argumentation. What does Paul use them for? How do quotations support Paul's assertions? Which sections of the argumentation are, on the other hand, expressed *through* quotations? Several quotations in this section contain textual problems. What kind of wording does Paul quote? How are his adaptations of the wording connected to his argument? To what extent does Paul preserve continuity with the original literary context of quotations? Finally, what is required from Paul's audience so that they can follow the scriptural argumentation?

5.1 The Stone Who Divides (9:30–33)

The dense section formed by 9:30–33 should be seen as a transitional phase between 9:6–29 and 10:1–21. The line of thought continues immediately from where 9:6–29 ends: Paul elucidates the juxtaposition between the called ones and the majority of Israel, but while in 9:27–29 there are three distinct groups, in 9:30–33 Paul leaves aside the remnant inside Israel and concentrates on the paradoxical situation where many gentiles are in and the majority of Israel

¹ For example, see Käsemann 1973, 264.

² Cf. Avemarie 2010, 301.

³ In this number Deut. 30:12–14 in Rom. 10:6–8 is counted as three separate quotations.

are out.⁴ It is noteworthy how rapidly his attention is drawn from the remnant to those Israelites who do not believe.⁵

5.1.1 *Two Types of Righteousness*

Paul begins a discussion, conducted in a word-play-like manner, of two different types of δικαιοσύνη. Righteousness associated with fulfilling the law, that is, Israel's "own righteousness", (9:31; 10:3, 5) is revealed to be essentially insufficient, and its pursuit results from a misunderstanding concerning the true function of the law (9:32; 10:2–4). The second type of righteousness is "God's righteousness" and "righteousness from faith" (9:30, 32; 10:3, 6). The object of this faith is Christ as proclaimed in the gospel. Only this latter type of righteousness has any soteriological potential.

True righteousness is the goal of an extraordinary footrace Paul pictures.⁶ Gentiles who were not pursuing any kind of righteousness have attained righteousness from faith. In contrast, Israel who pursued the "law of righteousness" has missed the true intent and goal of the law altogether.⁷ "Why?" Paul

4 For Paul's tendency to use a binary framework even when there should be three groups, see Wagner 2002, 122 n. 9.

5 The same pattern repeats itself in 11:1–14. Pace Wagner 2002, 119, I find it implausible that the change between verses 9:29 and 9:30 "replicates the rhetorical move found in Isaiah 1:9–10", where Isa. 1:9 (quoted in Rom. 9:29) with its perspective of hope stands in sharp contrast with the harsh address of Isa. 1:10. That Paul would structure his argumentation according to the original literary context of the passages he quotes is implausible, and the "replication" is not in any case especially exact: contrary to the prophet, Paul is not accusing Israel but seeking to explain the reason for its failure.

6 The use of the verbs διώκω ("to pursue") and καταλαμβάνω ("to seize, overtake") in 9:30 suggests that Paul uses here a footrace metaphor, just as in Phil. 3:12, 14 (Stowers 1994, 303–306; for more examples, see Wagner 2002, 121 n. 7). The language of stumbling (πρόσκομμα, σκάνδαλον) also accords well with this imagery. Yet it is a strange footrace indeed: although gentiles never intended to participate in the first place, they reach the goal, but it is a different goal than the one that Israel was pursuing. In the middle of the race God distracts the competition by placing an insurmountable hurdle in the way of the runners (cf. Stowers 1994, 305; "Paul entirely subverts the logic of his own metaphor").

7 The extraordinary phrase νόμον δικαιοσύνης has troubled commentators. Paraphrases such as "law which promises righteousness" read well in the context (Cranfield 1979, 508 n. 1, similarly Käsemann 1973, 264–265). However, Hofius (2002c, 162) is probably right in following Calvin and defining the expression as *hypallage* (ὕπαλληλη), a rhetorical device that transposes the relation of words. Cf. Smyth 1956, 678 (§3027): "Hypallage is a change in the relation of words by which a word, instead of agreeing with the case it logically qualifies, is made to agree grammatically with another case." Consequently, νόμον δικαιοσύνης would simply mean δικαιοσύνην νόμου, but through the transposition the expression "of law" gains extra weight. Hofius suggests that Paul also uses *hypallage* in 1 Cor. 1:17 (ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου) and 2. Cor. 3:18 (ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος) (Hofius 2002c, 162 n. 42). As for the concise phrase εἰς νόμον οὐκ