

Romans 10:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

As you might guess, the first thing I want to start with is the context.

Chapter 8 ended Paul's great theological work describing salvation. He ended with the point that our salvation is so secure because it is completely of God's choosing.

Then Paul moves on to answer an obvious question his listeners might have. How can we be confident of God's purpose in salvation if He has not saved His beloved Israelites.

Paul began answering that question in chapter 9. It is there that he tells us that God has been consistent in carrying out His purposes. The Old Testament revealed that not every genetic offspring of Abraham is saved forever. Now Paul is showing how the Israelites **have** responded to the gospel and how they **must** respond to the gospel.

You could say that in Paul's typical fashion, chapter 10 is **an aside** that further develops verses 32 and 33 of chapter 9.

Romans 9:32-33 says

32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

We are seeing this idea developed that if a man is saved, it is because God has saved him. If a man is lost it is because of his own rejection of the gospel and his rebellion against **God's way** of salvation. That is what we will see in chapter 10.

Let me give you a quick outline of the chapter:

Vs 1&2- Paul's desire toward his countrymen

Vs 3&4- Why the Jews are lost

Vs 5-10- Comparison and contrast between the law and the gospel as a way of salvation

Vs 11-13- The Gospel- open to all

Vs14-17 Salvation for the Jew and Gentile

Vs 18-21 Though offered to all, all do not believe.

Now let's take a look at the text. We need to start with verse 1 and think about its implications.

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

I would like to make four applications from this verse.

1. Grief and love go hand in hand
2. Paul prayed for people to be saved
3. How do we regard the enemies of the gospel?
4. Paul's heart is the only true result of good theology.

Point 1- Grief and love go hand in hand.

Remember what Paul said in the first several verses of Chapter 9?

Romans 9:1-3 (NKJV)

1 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,

We saw there that Paul had continual grief and sorrow in his daily experience because of the state of his countrymen. Here in verse 1 we see more of his attitude. **Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.**

We can learn from this that grief that is true is always accompanied with a love that is true. If we truly grieve for a person in the way that the Holy Spirit would lead us to grieve, that grief will be accompanied with a love that the Holy Spirit would lead us to love. If we are truly **grieving** about a person's lost-ness, about their **fallen-ness** and about their **hopeless** condition, it will be accompanied with a true love for them that **longs** for their restoration. In fact, we cannot do one without the other. We cannot love a lost person without grieving for the fact that they have sinned and offended God. We grieve that they are standing in God's wrath and are in great need of His salvation. And we cannot truly grieve for that person without wanting desperately for them to get right with their Maker.

Paul exhibited both of these traits. And we saw that Paul was willing to put his money where his mouth was. He ended up going to Jerusalem, probably in hopes

of carrying out evangelism to his fellow countrymen. It didn't work out that way. But it isn't surprising that he did what he did. He always meant what he said. Another application is in regard to our ministry to one another. I think, if you are like me, that we sometimes grieve for our brothers and sisters, but we are unwilling to love them. What I mean by that is not that we are unwilling to care about them. But we are unwilling to **DO** what needs to be done. We may know that their sin needs exposed. We may know that we need to take it to the next level because our ministry has not been successful. But what it comes down to is that **we are not willing** to do the work that it takes to love them to the point of restoration. We think that our feeling bad for them is enough. But it is not. Paul never stopped there. He was willing to put life and limb on the line for his fellow believers. And that is what we should do. Is there some believer that you grieve over but you are not willing to love? I would challenge you as well as myself this evening to commit to loving them, whatever the cost. True loving and grieving cannot be separated.

Now there is a side note here.

Paul was the apostle to the gentiles. And we see in Ephesians and in Acts that Paul carried out that ministry at a great cost to himself. He worked every day through the heat of the day, through the time that most of the city was asleep, teaching in a rented building. He was building up the gentiles. And this is the point I want to make here.

There is very little that is more self-deceptive than **pinning** for a good that is **not ours** to accomplish, while **refusing** to do that thing that **we can accomplish**. I say "self-deceptive" because we are usually the only person that is fooled by our duplicity. Paul said what he said about his fellow countrymen. And it was true of him. But that never stopped him from doing the ministry that was **in front of him to do**. Much of the ministry he was called to **was not that which was most sentimentally fond to him**. He really wanted to reach his countrymen. But that was not God's plan for him.

There is a truth here that is important for us. What does your heart want to do most sentimentally for God?

Is that path open to you?

If it is not, follow Paul's example. Do the ministry that **IS** open to you. If you don't, you are in great danger of being simply rebellious. And you are most certainly being self-deceptive. What ministry is open for you to do today? This week? This month? What are you doing that is more important than THAT

ministry? We need to apply ourselves to the opportunities we HAVE, even while we pray about the needs we cannot meet. That is what Paul did.

2. Paul prayed for people to be saved

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

This point was a surprise to me. I was not aware that there was a scripture where a New Testament believer prayed for the salvation of a people group. In fact, I had believed that there was no example of that in the New Testament. But here it is, regardless of what I believed. I might think that was pretty inconsiderate of God to do such a thing. But I know my place. My opinions mean nothing. His word means everything.

I cannot explain to you how such a thing works. This is not a prayer that you can **take any name you choose**, and **pray this prayer** and **rest assured that God will answer it as you asked it**. But it may be a prayer that fits in one of these two categories.

First, it may be the kind of prayer where you express your cares and desires to God and He will answer as it fits into His will.

Or it may be the kind of prayer like the prayer for healing. Sometimes God gives supernatural guidance to a person that a person will be healed, and that prayer should be offered in faith fully believing and expecting that person to be healed. I do not doubt that God has led some people to pray for the salvation of people in the same way. He has led them to pray for a person's salvation and has given divine guidance that God fully intends to accomplish this thing. Then it is for the believer to continue to pray until God accomplishes it.

Whatever the case, Paul prayed for the salvation of his fellow countrymen.

Now let's move to the next point.

3. How do **we** regard the enemies of the gospel?

This application slipped right past me until I began to study it. Look at this. How did the Jews treat Paul? Wasn't it the Jews that tried to kill him? Wasn't it the Jews that would slander him everywhere he went? Didn't they exude biting hatred at the mention of his name? Didn't they lie about him any chance they had, when they thought they could cause him trouble? Weren't they rebels against God? Weren't they God haters and resisters of the gospel? Weren't they cynical? Weren't they blasphemous?

Yet what is Paul's attitude towards them? He grieves for them and longs for them to come to Christ. You can see by this that Paul continually viewed them from the

perspective of truth. Paul could have allowed his frustration to rule him. You can bet that he felt plenty of that, at least at first. He would have easily thought that these people should listen to him because **Paul cared so much** for them. They should listen because **Paul knew so much**. They should listen out of respect at least. But Paul never allowed his frustration that they did not to win the day. If a person was rejecting Christ, he grieved for them, no matter what emotional turmoil he felt.

Now when they were attacking the sheep from within the church he responded differently. He was very defensive of the sheep. And he would confront the enemies of the sheep very forcefully. But for those who outright rejected Christ we see his response in today's text.

Does that look like our response? Have we allowed our own personal frustrations and our personal offended-ness to cause us to resent those who hate the gospel? What is our response when people ridicule and blaspheme Christ? I think Paul's example is the example we should follow. We don't need to envy the wicked as Psalms 37 and 73 address. We don't need to resent the wicked, as is so easy to do. We should grieve for those who do not know Christ, as Christ did on His trip into Jerusalem. It is very sad that a person would live like a sheep without a shepherd. Even if they are on late night tv mocking God on a regular basis. Even if they are in a position of political leadership and can't seem to make simple moral decisions. Even if they are college professors proclaiming the sheer idiocy of their imaginations. Even if they are family members who regard us as complete idiots. It doesn't matter. They are lost and they are worth grieving for. That is what Christ would have done and that is what Paul would have done. I think Paul and Christ are pretty good examples to follow.

The fourth application is this:

Paul's heart is the only true result of good theology.

There are those who would make a logical syllogism that says

A person must be chosen by God in order to be saved.

There is nothing we can do about that.

If a person is chosen they will be saved.

If a person is not chosen they will not be saved.

Therefore it is up to God to save people and we bear no responsibility in this endeavor.

I want to make very clear this morning that this is not a response to proper theology. That was NEVER Paul's response. It was Paul's response that it

honored Christ for the Gospel to be proclaimed to anyone who would listen to it. He believed that God would use the proclamation of the gospel as the MEANS of calling people to Himself. So Paul, the person who most clearly lays out the truth of God's election is also the example of the **hardest working evangelist** in scripture.

We must never allow our reasoning to contradict what God clearly says. We would do well to follow Paul's example. The truth of the matter is that we will never, at least in this life, fully understand why God does things the way He does. We will never, in this life, know why He chooses to use **the means of the proclamation of the Gospel** to save people. We will not know why He wants **us** to be involved in that process. We won't know why He doesn't just choose to do all of it Himself. He certainly **could**. So at the point where we want to have a logical argument with God, we would do well to just shut up. Because after all, who are **we** compared to God. We are just mere man as Paul has already pointed out. And if God wants to use **us** to proclaim this gospel as the means of saving people, **praise God**. We at least have some useful purpose on this planet.

I'd like to read a quote from Martyn Lloyd Jones here.

"If you find that your knowledge of doctrine paralyzes you, then you can take it that you are **misunderstanding** the doctrine that you think you know. If your doctrine leads you to do nothing; if it does not create within you a burning desire for the salvation of the lost; if it does not lead you to pray for revival, that the lost may be saved- then you are entirely **unlike** the Apostle Paul, and you have not understood his doctrine. The doctrine of God's purpose according to election is not fatalism! It is not a doctrine that says, "What is to be will be, whom God is going to save, He will save, therefore I do nothing." Not at all! That is its very **antithesis**. This is certainly not fatalism! If you really believe in the sovereign election of God you will say, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for that person is that he might be saved!"

After hearing the clear truth of God's election proclaimed by Paul, what do we say? How do we live?

Ok, now to verse 2.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Paul is able to bear them witness. He knows because he walked in their shoes. Paul had **a zeal**.

Galatians 1:13-14 (NKJV)

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.

14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, **being more exceedingly zealous** for the traditions of my fathers.

Philippians 3:4-6 (NKJV)

4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

6 **concerning zeal, persecuting the church**; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Acts 22:2-3 (NKJV)

2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and **was zealous toward God as you all are today**.

Paul knew all about zeal. Zeal is basically the energy put into ones pursuit. Zeal is a good thing if directed properly. It is like fire. Fire is very good when you are grilling your supper. It is very bad when it is burning down your house. Zeal is a lot like that. It is a good servant but a bad master.

I have been in Christian circles where zeal was held as the highest virtue. Putting great energy in what was expected of a church member was greatly admired and encouraged. Asking questions about **why** we should do such things wasn't always held in such honor. Zeal and sincerity are both of about equal value. While they are important in carrying out those things that are vitally important, they are useless in determining **what** is vitally important. It is rare to find a cult member who is not zealous and sincere. It is rare to find a terrorist who is not zealous and sincere. So we can see pretty quickly that zeal and sincerity cannot be relied upon to lead us.

Proverbs 19:2 (NKJV)

2 Also it is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, And he sins who hastens with his feet.

This is a good picture of zeal without knowledge. If you hurry up to do what is in your heart but your heart has no knowledge, it will only result in sin.

We must seek truth. Truth is what we must live by. Paul was zealous and sincere, but he was sincerely wrong. His sincerity and zeal caused Him to persecute Christ's children and by extension, to persecute Christ. Don't ever get the idea that because a person is zealous and sincere that they shouldn't be challenged or questioned. We must always start with the question, "What is true". Then if it is **true**, zeal and sincerity are appropriate.

It would be good for us to look at what we are zealous about today? What are we very energetic about? How do we try to influence people when we have the chance? Is the direction we give important? Is it true? Will it lead people to eternal reward? Paul started out headstrong in the absolutely wrong direction. But once God got hold of him and he came to know the Way, the Truth and the Life personally, Paul's zeal never wavered. And what He was zealous about was eternally good.

Ending prayer borrowed from another source.

O Lord our God, we come into Thy holy presence aware of our smallness, of our folly, or our foolish pride of knowledge in particular, of our uselessness. God have mercy upon us! We do indeed thank Thee more than ever for Thy blessed Word. We thank Thee for its fullness, its completeness, its roundness. Oh forgive us that we have ever, in our folly and smallness, imagined that we have comprehended it and can pack it into our little understandings. God have mercy upon us! Enable us to see that we need large hearts. Oh shed Thy love abroad in our hearts! Knowledge puffs up, charity edifies. Lord, we long for this edification, for this being built up in the faith, with knowledge and understanding but with hearts of love and a longing for the salvation of the lost.

O God, help us to see that we are meant to experience the **power** of the truth, that it is to **move** us and not merely to lie barren and useless in our minds and intellects. Oh keep us we pray Thee to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus! Make of us men and women like this Apostle Paul. O God **reveal** Thyself and Thy truth to us and so **fill us with Thy Spirit** that we shall indeed **be as He was**. Shed Thy love abroad in our hearts, O Lord. Fill them until they shall be overflowing, until we shall be melted with a sense of compassion for the lost and all who have gone

astray and who are hurtling to perdition. O God may we have something of that **heart of love** that was in Thy dear Son , who, looking out upon the multitudes, saw them as sheep without a shepherd and **had compassion** upon them. O Lord, apply Thy Word to us in the power of Thy Spirit. Hear us in this our prayer, and pardon and forgive us all. We ask it, pleading nothing, save **His glorious name** and the **merit of Him who loved us** and gave Himself for us. We see that we have no plea still but the fact that He died for us, and that Thou has ever looked upon us and called us by Thy grace. Lord, have mercy upon us! We ask it for His Name's sake. Amen.