

ROMANS

10:1-21

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Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 30th April 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Romans 10:1-21

Introduction

Last week we studied Romans chapter 9 which quoted from Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah, Hosea, and Malachi. This morning, we'll study all of Romans chapter 10, which quotes from Leviticus, Deuteronomy, the book of Psalms, Isaiah, Joel and possibly Nahum too. That's 9 or 10 different books in 2 chapters, some of them more than once.

And I wonder, do we know our Bible's as well as that? These little details are worth taking note of. I remember being at a Bible conference in my early 20's, and as one of the pastors taught he asked us all to turn to the book of Haggai, and as I did so I noticed there was a book called Zephaniah right next to it - and that was a wake up call to me, for I hadn't even realised there was a book *called* Zephaniah, let alone had read it. And if for you these books Paul quotes from are a surprise to even hear of, then may that be an encouragement, even a wake up call to you to read your Bible more.

Another example I'd like to share comes from another conference I went to a number of years ago at Calvary Chapel Westminster, where I met a guy (I believe his name was Mark), who as we were talking during a break asked "which book are you studying on Sunday's right now?". "Acts", I replied. "Which chapter?" he asked. And when I shared which one it was, without hesitation he said "Ah, great, that's where this happens!" giving some detail of exactly what that chapter was about. And that left an impression on me by setting an example of how we should aspire to know the Bible, and know what it says, not just know *about* it.

Indeed, if we were to appear on Mastermind, then our special subject as Christians should be the Bible. It's our daily bread, not cake for special occasions. So as we begin our study this morning, I urge you - don't let this be the only time you study the Bible this week.

Chapter overview of Romans

- **Chapters 1-8:** Christian doctrine
 - Sin (1-3), Salvation (4-5), Sanctification (6-8)
- **Chapters 9-11:** Israel
 - Israel - Past (9), Present (10), Future (11)
- **Chapters 12-16:** Practical Christian living
 - Practical Christianity

Now, last time in chapter 9 we saw Paul share his heart for Israel, his fellow countrymen, and write about their history, noting that their calling as God's people was by promise, not parentage. And that the promise was by faith, and not by works. But, he concluded in v31-33:

Romans 9:31-33

but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 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. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

So then, Israel had missed what God was doing among them, trying instead to attain righteousness by keeping the law. But what now? That's what Paul moves to in this chapter, considering Israel's state at the time he wrote this, which is the same position that they are in today, at least nationally - that they are lost, just as the Gentiles in general are lost.

And he'll begin this chapter much in the same way as the last, praying that they would be saved...

Overview of chapter ten

Overview of chapter ten

- v1 — Paul's heart that Israel would be saved
- v2-13 — Salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone
- v14-15 — The need to share the gospel

Then, in verses 2-13, he'll explain that the gospel is for *anyone*, because it is by faith — and therefore *both* Jews and Gentiles *can* be saved. However, he'll make clear in the closing sections of this chapter that not only is there a need for the gospel to be preached, but for it to be *received*. That is, it's imperative people hear the gospel, but it will do them no good if they don't respond to it.

Chapter ten

So, turn with me to Romans chapter 10. We read there in the first verse of this chapter;

Romans 10:1

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

It's inescapable how much Paul cared for his fellow countrymen. He didn't just *want* them to be saved, but he *prayed* that they would be, and as we know from the book of Acts, he willingly *preached* to them at every opportunity - even in the face of persecution.

But what of us? Sure, we should *want* others to be saved. We really should. Charles Spurgeon went as far to say if you have no desire for others to be saved, you're not saved yourself. But do we do anything about it? Specifically, do we pray for others to be saved?

You know, there are many things we can and should pray for, not knowing what God's will is in the situation. But when it comes to praying that others would be saved, we can do that knowing that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. God won't force anyone against their will, but oh — let us pray, for when we pray for others to be saved we can do so *knowing* God wants them to come to Him too!

So what stops us? I think it comes down to a lack of priority, and a lack of perseverance. First, frankly speaking, I think we prioritise other things over praying for others to come to Christ. Am I wrong in this? Do we spend more time praying for others salvation than we do checking Facebook, Instagram or TikTok? Do we more often pray for others than we watch the news, or TV shows, or read magazines or listen to music? Are all those other things bad? Not necessarily. But what will be our perspective of our current priorities once when we're in Heaven? Kirk Cameron once said you can determine a man's priorities by looking at his calendar and his cheque book. That is, where he spends his time and money.

When it comes to perseverance, do we give up too easily? Sometimes I think we do. Why? Perhaps it's because we want instant results, and — not knowing either God's timing, or all that He is doing, perhaps in how He is gradually softening someone's heart to Him — we cease praying. But we should persist!

We had a helpful conversation at our home group on Wednesday this week, talking about praying for others to be saved, and there were a few examples that came up where God has answered those persistent prayers. One of those was Siân's grandad. His wife, Siân's grandmother, had come to know the Lord early on in their marriage, and for nearly 30 years prayed that her husband would do so too. And just a handful of years before he died, he was saved.

Likewise, Alan had family members praying for him for years before he became a Christian relatively recently. And there's other examples such as these that should serve as encouragement to us to persist in prayer, and not be disheartened when we don't see immediate results.

So let us commit ourselves to more prayer for those we know that don't know the Lord. And also for those we don't, that we'd see others come to know Him too.

Here, Paul, having made clear his desire for Israel's salvation, writes this:

Romans 10:2

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

He is saying, that while the Jews were very religious, they hadn't paid attention to what God had said. They were zealous, but stubbornly ignorant (as one commentator put it). And that should be a warning for those who attend any church today, including you and I — because in the same way, there are far too many people in this country who know plenty about church, and are even committed to it as an institution, but they don't know Christ. Rather, they are committed to good works alone — like Israel, of whom Paul writes:

Romans 10:3-4

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

That is, they were ignorant of the facts that only God is good, and that they themselves were not; that there was no man or woman among them that had lived a sinless life, and that no amount of good works could atone for that. As a result, they had not come before God acknowledging that only He could save them, but instead held onto the law thinking it would help them, not recognising that it was like a loaded gun pointed straight at them.

Romans 10:5

For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."

Quoting from Leviticus 18:5, Paul emphasises the demands of the law — that is, if you want to live by the law, you must keep it. *All of it*. And keep keeping it. We read in Deuteronomy 27:

Deuteronomy 27:26

Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.' "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' "

And like wise in James chapter 2:

James 2:10

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

And we know from the opening chapters of this letter that none of us have kept the law.

Of course, this news is an affront to our self-righteousness, by which we like to think we're good enough to enter Heaven. But Paul is clear — here and in Galatians where he quotes from both Habakkuk and this same verse in Leviticus:

Galatians 3:11-12

But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

There is such contrast between faith and works. We read in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 3:4-6

And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

And we see this contrast in the immediate effects of both. In Exodus 32, immediately after Moses had received the law and come down from Mount Sinai to find the Israelites worshipping a golden calf, 3000 of them were killed. But conversely, in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost when God's Spirit was poured out, Peter preaches and 3000 were saved. That is the difference between the law and faith in Christ. And so Paul then writes, quoting from Deuteronomy 30:11-14...

Romans 10:6-7

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

In other words, you don't need to go on some spiritual journey, or reach some higher plane, or make any of the arrangements. For God is the author and finisher of your salvation, which He planned before the world began. He gave us the law to reveal our sin to us, and sent his Son to die in our place. And now, rather than finding ourselves in a desperate situation whereby we have to do something — anything — in our own strength, we see that simply through the word in our mouths and in our hearts, we may be saved. We read...

Romans 10:8-9

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

How simple is that! No laws to keep, no sacrifices we need to make, no special good works, not even a 10 step program. Just confess and believe. There is no need for a theology degree, no requirement to attain any scholarly or academic level. No GCSE's, A-Levels. No exams, no coursework. No other requirement. Simply repent, believe, and receive. Confess with your mouth, and believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead — a fact on which our faith hangs, as Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

But note, this means that a public confession of faith is not enough. You can't just repeat some words a preacher tells you to say and be saved as a result. Words without belief do not equal salvation. And likewise, belief in God without a confession of faith does not equal salvation. Believing there is a God is something even the demons believe, as James tells us in his letter. Rather, our mouth and heart must be in harmony, saying the same thing.

Paul continues...

Romans 10:10

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Again, it's not just saying the right words, it's believing in your heart. And it's not just believing God exists but confessing Him with your lips. For those that do, Paul says with confidence (quoting here from both Isaiah 28:16 and 49:23, which he also quoted last week in chapter 9):

Romans 10:11

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

That is, because of Christ paying for our sin, we'll be able to stand in front of God without embarrassment. Yet for those that have not accepted Him as their Saviour, they will have the shame of standing in front of a just and holy God as their judge, being found guilty of sinning against the One who gave them life.

But it needn't be that way, of course, for we read how God's salvation is open to all...

Romans 10:12

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

Indeed, salvation is only possible for anyone by faith in Christ, and not because of their works, their parentage, or nationality - something that Paul also notes in 1 Corinthians, Galatians and Colossians.

Romans 10:13

For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

Quoting from Joel 2:32, as Peter did in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost.

Friends, we need to take note of this. *WHOEVER* calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Salvation isn't only open to a select few. And as such we should be pleading with people to give their hearts to the Lord, ultimately being more concerned for their spiritual state than the state of our friendship or working relationship or how strangers look at us. We need to be willing to preach the gospel, come what may. We read on, as Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:7 and possibly Nahum 1:15:

Romans 10:14-15

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

I guess at some point we all have to deliver some bad news - and it's not enjoyable, right? But as Christians we get to share the best news ever. What a joy that is! What a privilege that is! What a blessing that is! How much happier would we be if we were regularly sharing the gospel? Sure, we would have sadness at those who reject it. But what joy at those who accept it!!

But somehow, in our society that is so full of distractions, we simply don't get around to doing it. Let me share a couple of well made points. The first is by Ray Comfort, who wrote:

Here is a fascinating thing. The original Greek meaning of "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" opens up some interesting thoughts. The word for "go" is very captivating. It is poreuomai, meaning "go." The word "all" also carries with it gripping connotations. It is hapas, and actually means "all." And if that doesn't rivet you, look closely at the word "every." It is pas, and literally means "every." So when Jesus commanded us, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," to be true and faithful to the original text, what He was actually saying was, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We are so fortunate to have access to knowledge like this.

Ray Comfort

Said with some humour, but with real seriousness too.

"But I'm not an evangelist!" you might say. OK, you need not be. But you are to evangelise. We all are. There are those called to be evangelists, those whose ministry is dedicated to that - I've seen that in action. The first person I think of these days is a man called Tim who attends my in-laws church in Gorseinon in Wales. He has a gifting and calling for evangelism - you can see it, and there is evidence of that. He does all he can — from joining the local rugby club, to going to quiz's with OAPs — precisely so he can share the gospel. And people are coming to know the Lord. But does that excuse everyone else in that church from sharing the gospel? No. And it doesn't excuse us.

It would be like saying, "well, I know a guy that has the gift of feeding starving children - but I don't, so I'll walk on by these little ones rather than give them the food in my hand". Would you be so heartless? I'd hope not. But likewise, would you be so heartless in not sharing the gospel you know with those that so desperately need it?

Look, being sent doesn't mean being ordained. And preaching doesn't mean we need to learn how to annunciate, or to emphasise words, or how to get people excited. It doesn't mean we need resources, or money, or even a plan. We just need to be willing. And look, it's not just pastors, leaders, teachers, elders, or whatever that are to preach the gospel. It is all of us. These verses don't say "Those who have beautiful feet are the ones who preach the gospel". Rather, it says it is those that DO share the gospel have beautiful feet. And we are all called to share the gospel.

Let me share a quote from Keith Green, the late Christian Musician...

"There is a command in the Bible that says, 'Go ye into all the nations and preach the Gospel unto every creature and make disciples of men.' We like to think, well, that was for the disciples. You know, that was for the apostles. That's for the missionaries. That's for humanitarians. That's for real Christians. I mean, really, they're so spiritual they can't stay in society, so they've got to go overseas and bury themselves in some tribe somewhere down in the Amazon.

But I'll tell you what, folks, the world isn't being won today, because we're not doing it. It's our fault. This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls on the earth, and nowhere in the world is the Gospel so plentiful as in the United States! Nowhere. I don't want to see us stand before God on that day and say, 'But, God, I didn't hear you call me.'

Here's something for you to chew on. You didn't need to hear a call -- you're already called! In fact, if you stay home from going into all nations, you had better be able to say to God, 'You called me to stay home, God. I know that as a fact.' Unless God tells you otherwise, you are called!"

Keith Green

Those are powerful words. Now we don't need to go home this evening and pack our bags for the far east, or for Africa (though God will call some to that). We need to realise the opportunities we have in front of us right now...

That job you are totally frustrated with. The class you wish you didn't have on a Thursday afternoon. Or the course you don't like. There's likely someone there who needs to hear the gospel. And God has put *you* there. And he's put me where I am. And more than ever I realise how much I need to speak to my colleagues about the Lord.

I don't know how long I have in my job. I don't know how long I or they will live. But I know time is running out. And that should pain us in the same way Paul looked at Israel. We should pray God would give us a greater heart for the lost.

Now, as for Israel, Paul continues writing to say that the Jews who didn't believe might have had some excuse if they had not heard the gospel, if they had never heard what the Lord would do, nor see what He did do. But we read on in verse 16, as Paul quotes from Isaiah 53...

Romans 10:16

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"

That is, the Jews had clearly been told the gospel in advance - yet they still didn't get it when it arrived. Why? Because they didn't hear what God's Word had to say to them. Paul writes:

Romans 10:17

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

If only they had listened to what God had already told them, it wouldn't have been such a shock to see how the Messiah came, and that His kingdom was not of this world. But they heard without hearing in the same way that you and I can listen to someone talk, hearing every word, but not really hearing what they're saying. Verse 18 says...

Romans 10:18

But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."

Again, as Paul quotes from Psalm 19, he says - yes, they heard these things. They should have known. But because they refused to actually listen, it was revealed to them that God would use the Gentiles as a wake up call to them. Paul quotes next from Deuteronomy chapter 32:

Romans 10:19

But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:
"I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation,
I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."

In other words, "I'm going to provoke you by bringing salvation to the Gentiles in order that you might see what you missed when you neglected the opportunity to be saved."

Romans 10:20

But Isaiah is very bold and says:
"I was found by those who did not seek Me;
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."

That is, us Gentiles were not even looking for salvation — we didn't know we even needed to be saved — yet God made His salvation available to all. Praise God!

Romans 10:21

But to Israel he says:
"All day long I have stretched out My hands
To a disobedient and contrary people."

As Paul closes this chapter we see God's heart, for He has stretched out His hands in love to Israel, though nationally they have rejected Him. So what then do we do with Israel? Has God finished with them? That's exactly the question Paul will start the next chapter with - and the answer is NO. God still has a plan and place for Israel. It is still His desire that they are saved. And the Bible is not short on showing how that all works out.

But as for us, we are beneficiaries of His grace just as he wants them to be beneficiaries of it. And we'll look at that more next week as we study chapter 11.

Conclusion

We really do have the best news to share. But it's also the most needed news! So as we go into this week, let us think how we might be bolder in sharing it, how we might pray more for others to receive it.

You know, I didn't time our study of Romans, nor the teaching of these specific chapters to be immediately before our outreach BBQ next Sunday - but that's how it's happened. So what are we going to do? Are we going to share the gospel? Are we going to pray that we'll see souls saved? We should.

Application questions

Here's two questions to ponder, and even discuss after the service or perhaps over the dinner table at lunchtime today:

- Who are you going to pray for this week, that they might be saved?
 - How will you go about praying more often for the unsaved?
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