

Sermons through

Romans

My Heart's Desire And Prayer To God

Romans 10:1

With Study Questions

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Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (Romans 10:1).

A Critical Situation

Driving down the freeway I saw a panel van to my right swerve off the road. It bounced into the median and started tumbling before coming to a halt on its side. As soon as I could safely come to a stop I pulled over. I employed my limited education in emergency situations looking to stop some bleeding and see if anybody had lost consciousness. By the time I had applied direct pressure on some wounds and determined that no one needed CPR, the paramedics had arrived.

What I did wasn't heroic. I was never in any danger. At most I was mildly inconvenienced. The fact is I considered it a great honor and privilege to participate in a critical situation. It was dramatic. There was an accident, there was bent steel, broken glass, there was blood, there were victims (none fatal) and I was helping.

It makes me wonder if the eyes of Jesus beheld the world as a sort of huge cosmic automobile accident—with 100% casualties—casualties which include His beloved children and brethren. Is there not this type of grief in the words of the Apostle Paul?

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" (Romans 9:2, 3).

A Deep Concern

The faultless doctrine and towering intellect of the Apostle Paul did not douse but rather ignited his love and care for others.

There was a reality and certainty to his convictions as it related to his concern for lost souls. Similar love and care for the lost forms an integral part of what it means for a Christians to be conformed into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29). To imitate the godly (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1) means to care about the lost. Every believer, at some level and in some form must reflect, in their thoughts and actions, the sentiment of Paul.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (Romans 10:1).

"Desire" in the Greek *εὐδοκία* means a feeling of strong emotion in favor of something. This was Paul's passion for his fellow Israelite. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) Jesus doesn't allow us to consider any man who crosses our paths (especially the infirmed—spiritually or otherwise) outside the boundaries of our concern. And yet it somehow seems that this burning compassion is in short supply. Why is that?

Minimizing Death

Could it be the invisibility of death? If I were the devil I would want to keep death out of sight. I wouldn't want people to ponder what happens when they die. I would want them to think their deaths will be as mundane, eventless and antiseptic as their lives. Could it be that the beautifully padded coffins we place in magnificent scenic gravesides we speed past during rush hour keep death at a safe distance?

The cemeteries are no longer placed by churches requiring a weekly contemplation of our own mortality. In times past and in other lands death was much more visible and hideous. Famines, plagues and persecutions would spur great Christian relief and evangelistic efforts—we saw a small example of this with the church's response to the tsunami and hurricane Rita; the church responded heroically. But for the most part, modern culture hides death; hiding what Solomon (the wisest of all men) spoke of in nightmarish terms.

Her house *is* the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death (Proverbs 7:27).

Jesus describes death as a **“place of torment” (Luke 16:28).**

Ashamed of the Gospel

Or perhaps Christians are ashamed of the gospel. That the Apostle Paul said he wasn't ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16) must mean that shame is a possibility. Are we ashamed of the gospel? Maybe we don't want to be associated with the embarrassing door to door antics of the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Maybe we recoil at the thought of somehow being put on the same shelf as Jim Bakker or Jimmy Swaggart. Maybe we're disgusted at the marketing strategies of modern Christianity and how similar many evangelical efforts resemble Amway or Herbalife or other multi-level marketing networks.

Or maybe it's how the media portrays Christians, as simple, unthinking, unreasonable, mindless bigots who have an unwarranted hatred or fear of anyone unlike themselves. Whatever it is, it can become paralyzing for many Christians.

The Power of the Gospel

Paul gave a reason why he wasn't ashamed of the gospel; because it was the power of God to salvation (Romans 1:16). Whatever it is that's stifling Christians, they must never forget that these aspersions are like fiery darts which the shield of faith quenches (Ephesians 1:16).

Efforts to degrade the Christian faith cannot diminish the power of the gospel any more than sticking your finger in the barrel of a shotgun can somehow dissuade the buckshot. Yet this finger does succeed if it can convince the Christian to remain silent and know his place—to not pull the trigger. Young elephants are chained to a small stake in the ground which holds them still. When they grow up they can pull the stake up with ease but don't because they've been convinced that it's a useless endeavor.

Blowing the Trumpet

I've offered a few possible reasons why a lack of concern for the lost is endemic among evangelicals. Whether it's lack of compassion, denial of the reality of death, fear of embarrassment, lack of confidence in the power of the gospel or just plain laziness, we need to repent of this evangelistic stupor.

Despite the way our various human environments make us feel there is a responsibility Christians have before God Himself. We must blow the trumpet!

But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.' ⁷ "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. ⁸ "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked *man*, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹ "Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul" (Ezekiel 33:6-9).

In order for Christians to deliver themselves from the responsibility of contributing to a lost soul, they are to blow the trumpet. The blowing of the trumpet is the warning that man, being sinful, will face the sword of judgment.

I'm seeking to blow the trumpet right now—I pray my tune is not uncertain (1 Corinthians 14:8). Perhaps someone handed you this tape, CD or paper to read. They are seeking to blow the trumpet. The tune goes something like this: Do not face your Maker and Judge apart from the love, grace, mercy and sacrifice

of Jesus. We spoke of the nightmare of death. But Jesus died to take away the sting of death (1 Corinthians 15:55) and satisfy the divine judgment of God (Isaiah 53:6) which must and will fall upon all who have sinned (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

Solomon's words confirmed the darkness of death. But he also taught that man is not left at the mercy of death. He also taught that...

The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, To turn *one* away from the snares of death (Proverbs 13:14).

Coming to Jesus

And how is one turned away from the snares of death? From Genesis to Revelation there is only one answer to that question—Jesus. Jesus taught that those who believe in Him, He will raise up on the last day (John 6:40); whoever believes in Him will never die (John 11:26); that if we confess Jesus with our lips and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved (Romans 10:9). With singular, unparalleled love, power and authority Jesus taught,

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also (John 14:1-3).

Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Coming to Jesus means believing in Him alone for salvation from sins. A true belief is a belief which produces a will and desire to acknowledge His rightful Lordship as King of our hearts—to see His commandments as good and right. Coming to Jesus means coming to His table—the Lord's Supper and coming to His body the church—where His victory is preached, His praises are

sung and His sacraments are administered. This is the trumpet that is to be blown—and **“there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).**

Questions for Study

- 1 How do you suppose Jesus beholds the world? How did the Apostle Paul feel about his fellow Israelite (pages 2, 3)?
- 2 Why do you suppose that concern for the lost is in short supply (pages 3-5)?
- 3 What have you found to be the general sentiment regarding death in our culture (page 3)?
- 4 What does it mean to be ashamed of the gospel? Has this happened to you? Give examples (page 4).
- 5 What is the power of the gospel and how should this inform and direct our actions (page 4)?
- 6 What does it mean to “blow the trumpet” and how can you participate in that responsibility (pages 4, 5)?
- 7 Is man left at the mercy of death? Explain (page 5).
- 8 How is man rescued from death? Have you been rescued (page 6)?