

# Providence, Prayer and Praise the Lord pt 1

By Jeff Noblit

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Romans 10:1-4

**Preached on:** Sunday, August 9, 2015

## **Anchored in Truth Ministries**

1915 Avalon Ave.

Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

**Website:** [www.anchoredintruth.org](http://www.anchoredintruth.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth](http://www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth)

Let's go together this morning to Romans 10. I want to do 2 or 3 things before we jump back into our study going through Luke. Romans 10. I wasn't sure that Brother Bill was going to get my verse over the baptistry but he did and, actually, that's what I've been meditating on mostly is Romans 10:4 but as I thought about it, studied over it, I thought, "Well, Romans 10:1-4 has a rich context and meaning for us," and always, of course, if you're interpreting a verse of Scripture you want to interpret it in its context. So I'm going to make this 2 parts because it would be too long to be one. Romans 10:1-4, I have entitled it "Providence, Prayer and Praise the Lord." Providence, prayer and praise the Lord.

Let's look at it together. Romans 10, beginning in verse 1. I was out in a lot of dust and dirt and smoke yesterday cleaning some stuff and I may hack a little bit and strain a little bit with this voice but you just pray for me and we'll get through it. Romans 10:1, Paul says,

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Providence, prayer and praise the Lord. First of all, I notice that Paul is praying for conversions. He is praying for conversions. Now, I'm convinced Paul prayed for lots of folks and lots of different kinds of folks but here he particularly is burdened for his brethren according to the flesh, Israel, his Jewish brothers and sisters. Now, the Jewish folks of this day particularly were a deeply religious, even Bible-believing people. Very genuine. However, they had a diligent religion but they were devoid of divine righteousness. Now listen to that. You've got to think. If the preacher is going to preach, you've got to think: they were diligent in religion but void of divine righteousness.

You know, in every age in which man has lived, there seems to be a vast throng of so-called Bible believers who are trusting in everything but Christ and Christ alone for their salvation. Now, did you know in a real sense you can trust in the Bible and be lost? There

are lots of folks who do that. They trust in the Bible but they are lost. They trust what the Bible says about moral rights and wrongs to be correct but they're lost. They trust what the Bible says about the definition of marriage but they are lost. They trust what the Bible says basically about how to raise children but they are lost. They trust what the Bible says about being pure and true and honest and ethical but they are lost. They can have a great trust in the precepts and principles and moral conclusions of the Scriptures but be lost. You see, the question is not, "Do you trust the Bible?" but "Do you trust the Christ who is revealed by the Bible?" Now, we would use the phrase, "I believe the Bible to mean that," but a lot of times that's not what it means. I mean to mean that we trust in the Christ revealed by the Bible.

Well, that's kind of the way these Jews were. These Jews were very devoted to the Scriptures but they missed Christ and Paul is praying for them. Think about them, they are like so many today. They are folks who are self-sacrificing. They are folks who are very giving and generous in spirit. They are folks who are very sweet in their personality. I don't want to hear another person say, "Oh, So-and-so, they are so kind and so giving and so sweet. They love Jesus." Not necessarily. Not necessarily. You can just discipline yourself to be the kindest, sweetest person in the world and still not be truly converted. Your human discipline to make your personality winsome is not necessarily conversion. As a matter fact, it's not conversion at all. And that's the way they self-sacrifice in giving. Many of them were probably kind in disposition and they had a thousand other things but they were not born of the Spirit. They were still lost, trusting in 1001 things, basically trusting in everything but Christ and Paul is praying for them. Praying for them.

"My hearts desire," he says, "and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." Now, think a little bit more about who these people are. They are Paul's enemies. They are religious leaders in particular but it had spread beyond them. These Jews hated Paul. They wanted to see him killed. Not only are they the enemies of Paul, but the enemies of the Gospel and the enemies of the church. And don't we know one thing that I think is interesting and this may shock you, these religious leaders and the Jews in general in this day, they had for the most part accepted a Savior. They believed in a Messiah, just not the Messiah and the Savior that Paul believed in and that Paul preached to them. Isn't that true of our day? Aren't there a lot of folks out there who are committed to a Jesus? They'll talk about Jesus, "Of course I love Jesus. Of course I am a follower of Jesus." But when you get down to, "Now, what are you talking about?" and they describe the Jesus they believe in, he doesn't look anything about the way that Jesus has revealed himself in Scripture. Listen to your pastor: Jesus is not a subjective entity. He is an objective truth you have to learn and discover and you learn and discover him for who he is, not what you subjectively would like him to be for you.

These Jews in this day would draw the line at having to worship and honor Jesus of Nazareth whom Paul preached. This Jesus that Paul preached just did not fit their agenda. They demanded that their Messiah become relevant to their preconceived notions of what they wanted a Messiah to be and primarily they were focused on external physical temporal stuff. "Heal me. Fix my finances. Fix my marriage. Get us out from under these overlord Romans. Fix that stuff and we'll believe you're the Messiah." Jesus said, "No,

I'm sorry, I didn't come to fix that stuff, at least not now," and they rejected him. We have to remind ourselves that Jesus is not our errand boy to satisfy our wondering desires.

For many years now and I know good people use this phrase and don't mean anything by it but I don't like to use it and that is this phrase, "My Jesus." Sometimes folks will say, "Well, my Jesus this." He's not your Jesus. He's Jesus. He is who he is and he does as he does and all that he is and all that he does is righteous. He will not and indeed cannot conform to man's notions of what he ought to be or what a true Savior ought to be. If he were to try to do that, which he wouldn't, then he would be committing sin and he cannot sin because for Jesus to commit to be anything less than what he is would be less than perfect because he's perfect.

So we learn of Jesus. We are disciples of Jesus. We begin to comprehend more of him and at times he shocks us and at times he startles us and at times he stretches us and we die to our notions and receive him all the more. That's what a true disciple does, but not these Jews. They became haters of the Christ of Nazareth. They became haters of Paul and his preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Jesus Christ yet Paul prays for them. "My heart's desire," he says, "and prayer to God for them is for their salvation." Look back at Romans 9, just a page over, Romans 9:1-3 where he expresses his heart on this same note again. He said, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit." I'm 9:1, 9:2 now, "that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren," he doesn't mean Christian brethren, he means his Jewish brethren, his national heritage, "my kinsmen according to the flesh." A burden and passion he has to see these folks come to Christ.

You know, the folks we have around us today that are unconverted, they are not at all different. You read a 2,000 year old Bible and you think, "Well, that's uniquely applicable to the unique situation of Jewish legalism and Jewish heritage." No, it's not. It's the same principle today. Everyone you know that is unconverted is usually religious in some way and is looking for a Savior. In some way, shape or fashion, they are longing for a Savior and in many ways they think they have found one. Very often their Savior is just themselves. "I think I know what's best for me. I think I know what's right and wrong and I can decide what's right and wrong for me." In fact, the whole spirit of our culture expanded and celebrated by the radical, progressive, liberal media we have and liberal politicians, the whole expression is, "If you feel it in your heart, that's right for you." Well, I'm sorry, if God feels it in his heart, it's right and that's all that matters. If we let all of mankind, everyone subjectively decide what's right and wrong for them, we're going to have anarchy and chaos in our culture and we're getting there fast. The truth is objective. We are all to yield to it and our founding fathers, those who discovered our country and established our country believed that truth that they are going to have a nation that works. They knew there had to be an objective standard we all agreed to submit to and for them that was the truth revealed in the Old and New Testaments. But we have lost that today.

So everyone is kind of looking for their own Savior and I'm just going to say this as an illustration, it's not that big a deal but do you know who Barbara Walters is? One of the

leading interviewers of our day. She was on television not too long ago. I couldn't believe she said it when the president had failed in some ways and hadn't gotten thing accomplished or whatever, she said, "What happened? We thought he was the Messiah." She actually said that and she was serious. Everyone is looking for a Savior. We all are but not everyone is looking for the Jesus of Scripture and that's the people Paul is dealing with. They are looking for a Messiah. Their Old Testament prophets taught them all this but they were not looking for the true Jesus.

One thing I think Paul is telling us here that ought to be encouraging to us is that no matter how, look, these folks, many of them saw, listened to, looked at, communed with Jesus Christ himself and then rejected him. That's heavy. But Paul knew this truth: salvation is all of God. And if it's all of God, there's always hope for a lost friend, a lost countryman, a lost loved one, a lost spouse, a lost child, a lost whoever. If God saves, there is always hope. There is always hope. Now, from the human perspective, many folks do seem hopeless. They have gone so far. They are so hardened. They are so obstinate. They are so unreachable. Yes, humanly, yes, but not with God. There's always hope with God.

Now, I think there is something interesting here when you think about what's contained in chapters 8 and 9 of Romans. You know what's in chapters 8 and 9 of Romans, don't you? Chapters 8 and 9 of Romans is the most articulate, unquestioned, thorough, slamdunk statement on the absolute sovereignty of God and salvation that there is in Scripture, that God chooses whom he is going to save. He hardens those whom he is not going to save. "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" God will do what he wants. The Potter can do what he wants with the clay and make one vessel for honorable use and one vessel for dishonorable use. The great sovereignty of God. Jacob and Esau, before they were born, God loved one and hated the other. Before they could do right and wrong. All of that is in chapters 8 and 9 and I could go on and on. The absolute sovereignty of God. So when you see Paul come to chapter 10 and he's praying earnestly for the Jews to be saved after talking so much about sovereignty and election, you think, "Well, that's ironic. That's inconsistent. How can that be? How can, Paul, you write to us," and by the way, look, you just cannot exegete the biblical text in its historical grammatical context and not agree that the Bible teaches the doctrines of predestination and election. It's just there. You can't explain it. I know people have tried. I've heard their arguments and I appreciate and I've got good friends who aren't quite on this point where I am or where we are but it's there. It's just there.

So Paul does all that and then he comes to chapter 10 and says, "But my passion is praying that God would save them," and you think, "Paul, how is that consistent? Why would you have such a prayer life for the lost when you have told us so exhaustively and thoroughly that God saves whom he's going to save?" But actually it's not inconsistent at all. You see, from Genesis to Revelation, God's absolute sovereignty and actually you don't leave that modifier in front of sovereignty but I just do it for emphasis. If he's sovereign, he's absolute but I'd put 3 or 4 more in front of it if I needed to. God's absolute sovereignty is boldly and unquestionably taught throughout the Scriptures and particularly in view of man's salvation. And when it came to saving his church, building

his church for his own glory for all eternity, for time and eternity, God did not reach down to the control panel and turn the sovereignty switch off. I've had people who pretty much suggested that that, "Well, yes God is sovereign in everything. He used Egypt and he used the Hittites and he used the Philistines and he used the Babylonians and he used the Medo-Persians and on and on. God used everything to achieve his perfect ends but when it comes to saving those who would be in his church for eternity, he backed off his sovereignty. Now man is in control of that." Absolutely not. God is sovereign there too.

It is equally true that God's absolute sovereignty has always included man's agency. Listen, God is going to perfectly save his elect and perfectly assemble his church but who exactly is the elect is hidden in his secret counsel and we don't know who they are. That's his business. In execution of his perfect plan, he has chosen to work through the prayers of his people. That's what I call balance. God sovereignly is going to save his elect. He's ordained a means through which he will and that absolutely includes the prayers of his people for their salvation. It's God's prerogative. By the word prerogative I mean it's his exclusive right and privilege as God. You know what this culture needs to wake up and realize? God is God. God is God. He has exclusive rights and privileges just by being God. Sometimes we begin to think, "Now here's what's right. Here's what's true. And here's what's fair and here's what equitable so God must be like that." That's upside down thinking. No, there is God who defines what's right, who defines what's true, who defines what's upright, who defines what's ethical and everything else must match him. There is not something outside of God that's right, God is right. There's not something outside of God that's best, God is best. There is not something outside of God that's ethical, God is ethical.

Are you with me? It's his own prerogative, his exclusive right and privilege as God to save his own elect but it's equally – now listen, plug-in, listen – it's equally his prerogative, it's equally his exclusive right and privilege to ordain that he will use people in the process of saving other people. Our attitude in prayer for the lost which we are commanded to do, we're commanded to pray for the lost, must never be altered by God's secret counsel concerning his elect. We pray for all. We urge all to be converted and come to Christ and we must stay diligently careful not to cross the line that separates our duty toward the lost and God's prerogative toward them. In other words, we leave God's prerogative to God and we go after souls and urge all men everywhere to repent and believe.

So we have this prayer emphasis as we begin this text. Paul says, "Man, my heart's desire, my prayer to God is that God would save some." Now listen to me, child of God, those of you who hold to the doctrines of grace like we hold to, which by the way is a thoroughly baptistic doctrine, those that hold to sovereign election, if you don't have a passion for lost souls, you're out of balance in your theology. As soon as Paul finished the most exhaustive statements on divine sovereignty, he says, "My prayer to God, my earnest desire and prayer to God is for their salvation. Oh God, save them." I'll say it again, you remember Charles Haddon Spurgeon's answer to the question when they said, "Well, what do you think about man's responsibility and God's sovereign election?" He said, "Well, if you ask me who is responsible if a man goes to heaven, I'll give you the

Calvinist answer, God and God alone was responsible. If you ask me who's responsible if a man goes to hell, I'll give you the Arminian answer, that man did not repent and did not believe and he's responsible for his torment in hell." Of course, Spurgeon was an avowed Calvinist but he's saying these truths balance and we hold both.

Well, II. and I must hurry: blinded and deceived. Blinded and deceive. I think I've got 4 points here. First of all concerning the Jews, notice they were blinded in the light. Blinded in the light. In verse 2 he says, "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." So they are deceived about the true Christ and the true way of salvation. They are blinded to it. Now, they were deceived by false teaching, very true, and the Bible does teach us that false teachers who don't teach people the true way of salvation will have a great accountability on the day of judgment, however, the Bible also says we are all self-deceived too. Others may be agents the enemy uses to blind and deceive but we have to be self-deceived for them to gain any following out of us. In other words, we can't say, "He taught me wrong," exclusively. We have to say, "We wanted to believe wrong in our hearts and that's why we followed a false teacher." James 1:14 says, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own," it was in his own heart, "lust." John 3:19, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds were evil." They from their own hearts had a base in ungodly lust that made them vulnerable and susceptible to the false teachers' ploys. They are self-deceived.

But let's look for just a moment at these Jews and their blindness and their deception concerning Christ and things Paul says about them. Well, he says in verse 2, "I testify about them." That little phrase "I testify about them" and Paul says, "Let me tell you a fact, this is a fact, this is a nonnegotiable, clear, undeniable truth about the Jews: they have a zeal for God. I mean, they are serious about it. They take their religion very seriously." I believe Paul here is probably giving an honest evaluation. He's probably saying, "Now, I can commend this about them." Now he's not saying be like the unbelieving Jews, he's just saying, "They are zealous, I'll give them that." And think about the great amazing advantages the Jewish nation had. When God sent a prophet into the earth, he sent it to Israel. That's why Israel was called the Valley of Vision because that's where the men came and gave the visions God gave them to the people. They had all these prophets and all these prophecies and all of them prophesied of Christ, yet they missed Christ. They had all the typologies of the Old Testament. They had the priest but they were never to look to just that priest but to see in that priest Jesus Christ who was coming who is the one true high priest. They had kings but they were never to put their final hope in their human kings but to see in their human king there is coming one who is King of kings, Jesus Christ. They had prophets but they were never to view their prophets as the final authority but Jesus who not only teaches the truth but is the truth. They had the types of their ceremonies, their ceremonial law. They would bring sacrifices but they were never to put their final hope in a lamb they brought on the Day of Atonement but in Christ who is the Lamb for the atonement of God for the sins of his children. So here they are with all of this light yet blinded and deceived and when Jesus came, they couldn't see him. They had great zeal for all these ceremonies and all their rituals and all these laws but they didn't have knowledge so they became the enemies of Christ even though he had

been before them for all those years. That leads us to affirm denunciation of a lie that is common in our culture today and that is this, "Well, it doesn't matter really what you believe as long as you're sincere." That's baloney. That's awful. It does matter what you believe and it does matter who you believe in no matter how sincere you may be.

Well, B. under the blindness and the deception: Christianity is a teaching religion. He says here, "They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." They need better knowledge. They need better teaching. You know, the importance of having correct knowledge of God and of God's Gospel cannot be overstated. It just can't be overstated. James Montgomery Boice said and I quote, "Christianity is primarily a teaching religion." That's the primary foundation stone of how our religion is established in men's hearts and how Christ's church is built up and progresses is through a preaching, teaching ministry.

I remember reading about our early settlers of our country, the pilgrims they were called. They were Puritans. They had broken from the state church of England and gone to only the Scriptures to follow religion because they saw the traditions that were man-centered and there were corruptions of the word of God and they risked everything to come to what they would say would be a New England so that's why it's called New England. "We want an England that's new and really does honor God because the old England was to be God's and it failed. We want a new England." They were so devoted to the biblical text. In every church they founded in early America always had 2 pastors. They called one a pastor and one a theologian. Do you know why? They didn't want somebody busy doing pastoral care when you needed to be studying the word of God. They were committed, "We must know the truth." Listen, if you're going to put your family on a little boat and cross the ocean and know about half of you are probably going to die, you want to die knowing the truth. You're not going to die with one chapter out of the Daily Bread devotional as good as that is. They wanted to know the truth. They were putting their lives on the line.

Christianity is primarily a teaching religion. In the Gospel of Luke we have seen over and over again preaching through Luke how Jesus did tons of wonderful and gracious and merciful things but his primary ministry was preaching and teaching and he shows that over and over again. Mark gives us a good example of this. Jesus has been healing, I believe it's in the city of Capernaum, and he has healed so many people, helped so many people that in Mark 1:37-38, "They found Him, and said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.'" In other words, "Come back and do some more of these wonderful blessings." But notice what Jesus says, verse 38, "He said to them, 'Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came out for.'" God does miraculous stuff but that's not the main thing in Christian ministry. It's the preaching and the teaching of the truth because men must have knowledge to rightfully believe on Christ.

Well, let me just say that in Acts 6:2, we have the apostles being burdened by widows who are not being fed their daily rations of food and the apostle said, "Well, let's get some deacons." This is where deacons came from. "And they'll take care of this very

important ministry of taking care of these dear ladies but we must spend our energies so that we can properly preach and teach the word." Because Christianity is primarily a teaching religion. In 1 Timothy 4:13-16, Paul discipling Timothy, outlines the main thing Timothy is to be about. He says, "give attention to exhortation and teaching." He continues on, "Take pains in these things; be absorbed in these things. Pay close attention to your teaching or your doctrine." Notice the redundancy in the emphasis here. One Greek scholar said, "Basically Paul is telling Timothy, 'Thoroughly exhaust yourself in your preaching ministry.'" Which means there wouldn't be time for much else. Why? Because Christianity is primarily a teaching religion. It's based on true and real knowledge.

You see, Christianity must be according to right knowledge. Proper teaching is the first necessary step in an individual's conversion. So let's go to that, C. in our outline: true knowledge. True knowledge. He says in verse 2, "The Jews have a zeal for God. Now, they're zealous. I mean the devotion, the work, the sacrifice they put into keeping their rituals and the ceremonies is admirable but they don't have true knowledge." Now, the word "knowledge" in verse 2 when he says they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge, the word "knowledge" there is not the word "gnosis." It transliterates from the Greek into g-n-o-s-i-s. It's where we get the term Gnosticism which is a cult of the first century that taught that we have elite leaders who have knowledge no one else has and you've got to come to our elite leaders to really find out the truth which is a lie. So this is not that word for just gnosis which means just knowing simply. For example, we have secular scholars in secular universities who are New Testament scholars and they study the New Testament text but all they have at the end of the day is just knowledge, gnosis, just pure simple facts about Jesus, facts about the Gospel, facts about the teachings of Paul. It's just in their head. But the word that is used here that Paul used here is not gnosis, it's epignosis. He says, "They have a zeal for God but not according to epignosis," not gnosis. Epignosis is a different word, it means true knowledge. Not just knowledge but true knowledge or real knowledge. What he means is, "They don't have that kind of Spirit-empowered knowledge that's informed the mind, it's been embraced by the heart and it has affected their behavior." They didn't just learn something in their head, this thing has apprehended their life.

Paul said, "That's what they are missing. They've got a bunch of gnosis, they know the prophets, they know the teachings about the coming Messiah but they don't have epignosis, true saving knowledge of Jesus Christ." Another way of saying it is that epignosis is knowledge that is understood in the mind, at least to a degree. You'll never understand all the glories and dimensions of Christ, even in eternity you won't because he's infinite and glories. But it is to a degree understood in the mind. It is joyed over in the emotions and it is trusted in by the will. Never perfectly but that happens with epignosis. It's a wholehearted embracing and trusting in the contents of the teaching. So the Jews, again, had lots of simple knowledge, gnosis, concerning Jesus. They had the Scriptures. They had the prophets. They had the typologies and the ceremonies. But they lacked epignosis, true saving knowledge. So Paul, having himself been one of thorough and rich gnosis at one time but was knocked down off his horse one day and God changed his gnosis into epignosis. He gained a true knowledge that no longer was just



facts in his head about Jesus but a heart that loved him and embraced him and a will that said, "This is now my Lord and my Savior."

Are you there? Have you learned things about Christ in your mind or has Christ got you? Do you have gnosis or epignosis? Paul's burdened prayer is, "They have got to know epignosis, the true knowledge, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ." This is why Paul prayed and this is why we must pray. Now listen to your pastor, listen: only the Holy Spirit of God can move on the preaching and change people from having gnosis to epignosis. Can change people from having head knowledge to heart embracing, life-changing knowledge. That's why I think some people marvel over you, not me, you. People come to our conference and things and they see the number of you who can articulate sound doctrine and it's not cold facts, you love the truth, and they see your devotion to one another. They see you serve and now don't get the big head, you're not finished and neither am I, but you have had an impact on guys and on ladies, and they wonder, "What are you doing?" I said, "That's the key. Years ago I began to learn as a pastor I needed to stop doing and let God start doing." I can do a pretty good job at gnosis, only the Holy Spirit of God can come into your heart and give you epignosis, true knowledge, saving knowledge. It makes you get up and come to church even if I'm not on my best preaching week or month. It makes you get up and come to church and be loving and be loyal and be supportive even if you're a Sunday school teacher isn't as wise and holy as you are. Amen? Amen? All of a sudden the school teacher said? That's what I thought.

Something has happened in here. All of a sudden I can forgive you and get over you even though you and I don't agree on a number of things but we agree on the things that matter and we can hug each other and love each other and mean it. All of a sudden you're a power and control freak out there in the community. You run a big business but when you come to the church you're just another guy because epignosis got you. It has humbled you. It made you know that God has given you some gifts and some special abilities and you can build companies and stuff like that but in the church you're just a brother. Epignosis makes you different. Makes you humble. Makes you sweet. Makes you say, "Oh God, how can you save a sinner like me? Just let me clean the toilets at Grace Life and go to heaven and I'm fine." Epignosis does that. Now, if you keep on cleaning the toilets and you're supposed to do different, that can be an idol too, by the way. You can be too humble and have an idolatry of your humility, amen? But epignosis means just whatever God wants. I like epignosis. It's a better gnosis.

You see, the Bible says "knowledge puffeth up." It makes you proud. "I know the doctrines of grace. I can discuss the doctrines of God's sovereignty and election." Well, yippe yi yo ki yay. Let me ask you something: can you go in a small group class and love your brothers and sisters when it isn't fun? That's what I'm looking for because the doctrine of sovereign grace has captured your heart and you're grateful and you are humbled and you're glad and you just want to build up the body of Christ, amen? That's what makes a great church and that's what makes a church glorify God because the world looks at you and says, "How do y'all get like that?" And you say, "We're not real sure. It's

beyond knowledge, God has done something in us." By the way, we still struggle in sin and have to repent all the time, amen? But he has done something in us.

We've had some epignosis. John O. Simms was preaching and I visited there couple of times. I couldn't find a good exposition so I just kept going up there. John O was preaching on, "Why I'm a Baptist." Good message and what he said is exactly why I'm a Baptist and he kept emphasizing in the historical sense of what Baptists were. Not necessarily according to all we're seeing today but historically why we agree with our Baptist forefathers. And one of the points he brought out was the point that we bring out, he said, "You know, Baptists believed in the baptism of disciples only. That you had to be truly converted and have given evidence of true salvation and then we'll baptize you." That's why they were called Baptists because they took all these people who were sprinkled as babies in the state churches of Europe and they preached the Gospel to them and then they became really converted and then the Baptists would say, "Well, now you've got to be baptized." They said, "If we're baptized, do you know what the church of England is going to do to us? They're going to kill us because we've been sprinkled in the Anglican church of England and we'll be rejecting our statehood and our nation and our religion." The Baptists said, "Well, that's what the Bible says," and so they started being baptized and thousands and thousands and thousands were martyred. I don't know if you have checked lately but if your baptism causes your death, you're probably going to be real about Jesus before you get in the water. The Baptists taught the baptism of disciples, that you're not just sprinkled because you're born into a family. That happened to be in the church. You were baptized when you had been born again and you're a disciple.

And he emphasized how, like us, there had been a time when they weren't thorough and careful in conversions and they had far, far, far too many people that went through the motions and were not Christians. I thought, "That's what Paul is talking about. Far, far too many in Baptist churches have some gnosis, maybe a lot of gnosis, but not true knowledge." By the way, this is taught throughout the New Testament. Real quickly, it will be on the screen, Colossians 2:2. Paul writes to the church at Colossae, "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge." Do you know what the Greek word is for "true knowledge"? Epignosis. He said, "I don't want you to just know the doctrine, I want it to know you. I want it to have gripped you. I want it to have changed you. I want you to have been born again." True knowledge. Colossians 3:10, "and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge," epignosis again. 2 Peter 1:3, "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge." 2 Peter 1:8, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words he's saying, he just listed some spiritual attributes. He said, "If those are yours, then it's evidence you are one who has the true knowledge." Not gnosis, epignosis. James 2:14, 15, 19, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith," that would be the parallel of gnosis, "but he has no works? Can that," simple gnosis kind of "faith save him?" Now, I'm interjecting. I'm not saying that's in James's text but I mean the truth of it is. That kind of faith that is just cold intellectual grasping, I was raised in it. Can that faith save you? Of

course the answer is no. James 2:19, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe," gnosis, the demons have gnosis, but they don't have true knowledge. So when Paul said in Romans 10:2, "These Jews, my brethren according to the flesh, they have great knowledge and a zeal for God but it's just basic, cold, mental assent. They don't have zeal according to knowledge."

So he first talks about praying. He says, "I'm praying. I'm praying. I'm praying. My heart's desire and my prayer to God is for their salvation because they have got zeal but not knowledge," and that's what we ought to be doing. So Paul basically, you can really sum up almost Paul's whole ministry: preaching and praying, praying and preaching, preaching and praying, praying and preaching, preaching and praying, praying and preaching. A lot of folks don't believe in that anymore. I mean, there are a lot of people that say we're crazy. "You can't get people to come if you just preach the word and pray God changes hearts so that they will love the church and serve one another and then put them in a small group and say serve one another in small groups now." They say, "Your crazy. It won't work." It will if the Holy Spirit of God changes them.

Here's the key, are you listening? They don't believe the Spirit of God uses the preaching of the Gospel to transform hearts. I don't want to be too hard here because I know there are some good brothers who do some of these things and I love them. It's not the preaching of the word in the power of the Spirit plus strobe lights that saves. Not that strobe lights are always wrong but if you look at those too long you can't read your Bible for 30 minutes. It's not preaching the word in the power of the Holy Spirit plus dry ice smoke on the stage when the pastor comes out. There is nothing wrong with dry ice but I don't know why a church has to look like a nightclub to save souls. Again, there are some good brothers who do some stuff and I don't want to be condemning but, brothers, let's shipwreck our souls on this Gospel preached in God's Spirit. Listen, and if God doesn't save souls, if the church doesn't do well, do you know what we do? We pray more and we pray more and we pray more and say, "God, it's your Gospel not our shenanigans and we will sink before we will put man's worldly flesh to effect in the church trying to build it." I'd rather build a church of 5 that God built than a church of 5,000 that I built. What good is it going to do when you've got 5,000 and only about 200 of them have epignosis? I'm going to tell you what it's going to do, are you listening to me? This is for pastors. Quite of few pastors follow our broadcast. This is for pastors: on the day of judgment you'll answer for all 5,000 souls that came because you had the best light show in town and go straight to hell, proud of their light show. Now be careful. Let's not get on the bandwagon and beat people up because they go to a church that does some of these things but just know in your heart, we've got to be careful with looking to anything other than the power of the Holy Spirit to use the preaching of the word of God to change hearts.

So it's preaching and praying and praying and preaching and preaching and praying and praying and preaching and preaching and praying and praying and preaching. "Wait a minute, I haven't seen anybody saved in my small loop in 3 or 4 years." You need to pray. You need to say, "God, I will not teach another year and nobody get converted through our small group ministry. I'm just not going to do it. God, I'm just going to tell you, I'm not going to do it. We're going to pray and we're going to cry out to God. We demand,

God, that you save somebody this year so that you are glorified through this class. We're not demanding that you do it for us, we're saying you ought to get honor and glory and we can't stand another year of not seeing a soul saved." If you'll believe God, he might do something. Pray it and believe it. Pray and believe it. The old song we used to sing,

"Brethren, we have met to worship and adore the Lord our God;  
Will you," help me, "pray with all your power, while we try to preach the Word?  
All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down;  
Brethren, pray, and holy manna will be showered all around.

"Brethren, see poor sinners round you slumb'ring on the brink of woe;  
Death is coming, hell is moving, can you bear to let them go?"

That's what Paul is saying, "My heart's desire. I can't bear to let my brethren according to the flesh go."

"See our fathers and our mothers, and our children sinking down;  
Brethren, pray, and holy manna will be showered all around."

I'd rather have a guy who doesn't get the doctrines of grace but believes the Gospel and the power of the Spirit alone will save souls and can sing this song and mean it than a guy who can get up here with Grudem Systematic Theology and dot every "i" and cross every "t," amen? I want the doctrine to get in our hearts, not just in our heads.

"Sisters, will you join and help us? Moses' sister aided him;  
Will you help the trembling mourners who are struggling hard with sin?  
Tell them all about the Savior, tell them that He will be found;  
Sisters, pray, and holy manna will be showered all around.

"Is there here a trembling jailer, seeking grace, and filled with tears?  
Is there here a weeping Mary, pouring forth a flood of tears?  
Brethren, join your cries to help them; sisters, let your prayers abound."

Where's our ladies that meet at daylight and just pray for lost souls? And just say, "If the doggone men ain't gonna do it, we'll do it." Not to gossip. Not to discuss anything but just pray, "God, save souls!"

"Pray, oh, pray that holy manna may be scattered all around."

I have been convicted that I have not been praying for lost souls as I should but I can start and you can start. I just wonder if you would make a commitment in your heart this morning. I've got this in my notes. This is your conclusion for practical application this morning. Just between you and God, us together, we say, "God, God forbid I don't keep at least one soul or one family on my heart I'm praying to get saved." At least one soul or one family. I know many of you keep some on your heart but at least one soul or one lost family that you're asking God to save. Would you do that? I'm just going to have at least

one lost soul or one lost family and pray. I've got one on my heart. I've been praying for them. Not as much as I should. I'm going to try to get them signed up for Friend Day and I'm challenging you to get there. God knows you've got to work, you've got to feed your family, you've got to go to ball games, at least you feel like you do. I do. God knows we live in a real world but there are seasons when it's time to get back to some things and we're praying that this fall with our meeting with John O. coming up, that we'll get like the old song says, pray while we try to preach the word and see what God does. And all of God's people said? Amen.

Let's stand together.