

Dear Friends,

The idea of "Saved people needing salvation," a point which Paul specifically makes in 2 Timothy 2:10, as well as the entire tenth chapter of Romans, has never been more needed than in the present season. Much of contemporary Christian culture in our country has long been too invested in the political scene and too little in living and looking for their/our heavenly "Country, whose builder and maker is God." We see the result in professing Christians who think joining the political culture in angry hatred of those who disagree with us is perfectly acceptable. How do they reconcile this mindset with Jesus' words about loving our enemies and doing good to those who do not treat us kindly? About truly esteeming other believers, including believers who disagree with our political or spiritual ideas, as better than ourselves? I find myself these days increasingly praying for believers, many of them people I know and love in Jesus, who manifest this hate- anyone-who-disagrees-with-your-toxic-disposition far more than they exhibit the love of God in their lives. Paul's prayer for misguided and over-zealous-about-the-wrong-things children of God occupies much of my present meditations and prayers. John emphasizes that we cannot possibly hate our enemies and love God. We may say we love God, but if we hate our brother whom we see, John reasons; how can we simultaneously love God whom we have not seen? (1 John 4:20 and context) The nature of hate is such that it slowly burns and consumes a person wholly. They may start hating people whom they sincerely regard as evil people, but soon they rationalize hating their own brothers and sisters in Jesus with whom they simply disagree over non-essential issues.

I vividly recall a memory from my childhood. My father often engaged in political discussions with a neighbor, a godly man of different race, culture, and political outlook. With no exception, they would engage in a mutually sincere discussion of their thoughts. At the end of the conversation, they would shake hands, wish each other well in their farming work and their family, and look forward to their next visit. Today's political culture has wholly abandoned this godly disposition in favor of its hate-anyone-who-dares-to-disagree-with-you poison. When the Christian community has a golden opportunity to manifest the spirit of Jesus and grace, what are many of them doing? They are imitating this toxic disposition instead of shining the light of Jesus and the gospel on the darkness of that lifestyle. What will it take to shake us and drive us back to the sweet reasonableness of Jesus and the gospel? I fear the answer may be far more painful than we imagine.

Folks, let's make a sincere commitment to ourselves, to our faith, and to our God. When our angry juices begin to stir, immediately turn to the Lord in prayer, and pray for our brothers and sisters in our church and abroad, for our governmental leaders in authority, and for ourselves. As the cliché goes, we are either part of the problem or part of the solution. Believers should live so as always to be the bright light on the hill that shines brightly in an otherwise dark world. We can't shine when we imitate darkness.

In Romans 10 Paul prayed for people who strongly opposed his faith and his Lord. So should we. He was willing to sacrifice, painfully so, for them to learn more about "Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts 17:18) The "righteousness which is of faith" speaks the same clear message to us. Are we listening, or have we chosen to plug our spiritual ears and refuse to listen? Let's listen, believe, and follow her message. Be that shining light of grace in your world.

Love in Jesus,
Joe Holder

Ignored and Misunderstood Scriptures

(Romans 10:8-13)

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:8-13 KJV 1900)

When Bible students ignore context, see one word, such as “saved,” and think only in terms of eternity, they confuse the text and miss the point of Scripture’s teaching. If we recall Paul’s description of the people for whom he prayed in this context, we find abundant evidence that they were already saved in terms of their eternal security or salvation. Romans 2:8-29, 9:4-5 both affirm this point. Further, Verse 8 specifically reveals that the word of faith already resided within these people. That “**righteousness which is of faith**” was already speaking to them in their heart. They needed to learn—and believe—the truth about Jesus, the theme of Paul’s prayer for them, but they presently demonstrated abundant evidence of eternal life. If we would answer a simple question honestly, it would take us far in learning the true value of this lesson. Do you ever need to be saved from yourself? I suggest that was much of the problem with these people for whom Paul prayed.

For modern Christians who tend to see “Save” in the Bible and conclude only new birth or going to heaven when you die, it likely seems strange to think of saved people who need to be saved. Consider Paul’s words to Timothy that make this precise point.

*Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may **also** obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus **with** eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2:10 KJV; emphasis added)*

What does this verse reveal about these people?

1. They are God’s elect.
2. They presently possess “*eternal glory*.” Paul describes them as presently “*with*” it.
3. But Paul endured great trials because of his passion to help them “*obtain*” yet another “*salvation which is in Christ Jesus*.”

Here we find a Bible verse that describes saved people who yet need to be saved. In his Expository Notes, Tom Constable makes this precise point. Here is a summary of his longer explanation.

The idea of Paul suffering for the sanctification and growth of the churches is a common New Testament theme and is easily seen in this passage as well.

“Here then are saved people in need of salvation! The salvation in view is necessarily sanctification or, perhaps, more precisely, victorious perseverance through trials (1:8; 2:3, 9).”

“...saved people in need of salvation,” precisely the point Paul teaches in Romans 10.

Most contemporary Bible teachers overlook that Paul was quoting an Old Testament passage. Here is that passage, immediate context included.

*For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? **But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.** See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love **the LORD thy God**, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: **and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.** (Deuteronomy 30:11-16; emphasis added)*

Moses affirms the point we make in Paul’s quote of these verses. **The people to whom Moses wrote Deuteronomy were already the people of God.** Moses identifies their existing relationship with God. He teaches them to “...love the LORD thy God.” God was already their God, and they His people. Further, the outcome of Israel’s obedience to Moses’ teaching in the Deuteronomy passage was not going to heaven when they died, but the temporal blessings of Canaan, contingent on their obedience, “...**and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.**”

Paul started Romans 10 with his prayer for these people to be saved from their ignorance of Jesus and from their blind zeal. In short, he truly did pray for them to be saved from themselves, something that is essential if God’s people hope to discover and participate in the rich temporal blessings of believing Jesus and the gospel. This perspective of Romans 10 harmonizes fully with Moses’ words to Israel, God’s people, not pagans, in the primary text that Paul quoted from Deuteronomy.

For Israel in Moses’ time, the blessings of faith and obedience ensured that they would occupy and enjoy the rich blessings of Canaan, the land God promised to give to them when He first gave that promise to Abraham centuries earlier. Simply, being “saved” for Israel was equivalent to occupying and enjoying the bounty of Canaan. Failure was remaining in the wilderness as wandering strangers.

Paul understood the difference between chastening and blessings, the reason he so earnestly prayed for these people to unstop their spiritual sensibilities and “Hear” the message that the “**righteousness which is of faith**” was speaking to their hearts even as he wrote of his prayer for them.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Think. Do we believe something to make it true or to make it happen? Or do we believe something because we have evidence that it is true? If we “*believe unto righteousness*” with our heart, righteousness is already a fact. The same logic applies to confession. A criminal doesn’t confess to a crime he didn’t commit. Nor does his confession make him guilty. He confesses because he is guilty. We confess to reality, to present facts. If we confessed that Jesus is our Savior when He is not, we confess a lie. And if, when we confess to our salvation, Jesus is already our Savior, we are confessing to an existing fact. He is already our Savior. ***Our confession honors Him for His saving grace.***

1 John 5:1 simply states that the believer is already born again, so belief is not a cause (Or an instrument or agent) in our being born again. It is rather a subsequent result or consequence of our being born again.

Once again, if we follow the language of the passage, we realize that, after new birth, we need to believe the truth of the gospel and to confess to our faith in Jesus, to begin living our faith, for only in so living our faith do we realize the blessings of our own “Canaan” land which the Lord gives to His children who listen to and believe the message which the “righteousness which is of faith” speaks to those in whom that faith dwells.

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. No child of God’s loving mercy ever confessed and believed Jesus only to be disappointed. We may well—and rightly—on occasion be disappointed, even ashamed, of our own failures, but never of Jesus.

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. I love these words. “**For there is no difference.**” God doesn’t deal with His Jewish children in one way and His Gentile (In the first century this word was used by the Jews to refer to all non-Jewish people) children in another way. Nor shall He ever deal differently with His beloved children. When His blood-bought child faces life’s painful difficulties and cries out to Him for help, He always hears. And if we believe the passage, He also responds to those cries “Richly” with tender and loving grace. And that is precisely the point Paul has been building from the beginning of the chapter. When a child of God calls on the Lord, He doesn’t check their credentials or their race or culture. They belong to Him. He knows and loves them. And He richly responds with blessings. Jesus affirmed this comforting truth in His teaching on prayer in Luke 11:1-13.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Based on Scripture, who calls on the name of the Lord? Who prays? Jesus’ Luke 11 extensive lesson on prayer built on children going to their Father for help, so the implication is that children of God pray. Consider the model prayer Jesus taught. In the Sermon on the Mount.

*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, **pray to thy Father** which is in secret; and **thy Father** which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.* (Matthew 6:6 KJV)

*Be not ye therefore like unto them: for **your Father** knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: **Our Father** which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*
(Matthew 6:8-9 KJV)

In Verse 6, Jesus emphasizes an existing “Father-child” relationship in those who pray. In the opening line of the model prayer, He continued that emphasis, “**Our Father....**”

Given Paul’s extensive focus on the character of the people whom he described, and for whom he prayed earnestly in Romans 9 and 10, people who already have the “righteousness which is of faith” indwelling and speaking to them, the logical conclusion from this context is that these people were already born again. As growing children in a family need the abiding nurturing of their parents, even so we, as children in the family of God need His abiding teaching and guidance. It is such a “Family” setting that Paul describes in this lesson. Will we be the obedient and respectful child in His family, or will we be the stubborn rebel? We choose. We also experience the fruit of our choice.

Elder Joe Holder