

Ignored and Misunderstood Scriptures (Romans 10:1)

Dear Friends,

People love to read, and many read prolifically. However, many of these same people, when they turn to their Bible to read, they often strangely ignore all the basic rules of logic and of literary interpretation. Often their reasoning suggests that they refuse to consider anything beyond a single verse as at all relevant to the "Contextual" meaning of a verse or single sentence. The more they can isolate sentences and verses in their minds the more they can rationalize any doctrinal interpretation they wish to impose onto the text. We have seen this refusal to regard context in all the passages we've examined in this series.

A wise and correct "Contextual" reading of a passage will follow the path of an every widening spiral. It starts with a sentence or verse, but it methodically spirals outward to the chapter in which the lesson appears, to the book in which the lesson appears, to other books written by the same human author, to the Testament, Old or New, in which the passage appears.

I often remind people in my preaching of the difference between reading the Bible, often speed reading it, and a systematic and thorough study of the Bible. Reading prepares us to study, but it is the first of many steps we must take to reach our goal of serious study of its teachings. Few believers in our day even understand the idea of "Study" at all. Put the words "Study" and "Bible" into one sentence, and they often look at you with a blank stare on their face. The idea simply doesn't compute. Often they form preconceived beliefs regarding God, salvation, and the Christian life with little regard for Scripture, grabbing sentences or verses here and there which they think support their preconception.

I recall a brief conversation from my youth that will underscore the distinction between reading and studying spiritual things. I knew an older man who was a deacon in a church about fifty miles south of the community where I lived. We were visiting in late spring. During the conversation, he mentioned that he always chose a major reading task for his idle time during the long winter months. For the winter just finished, he chose John Gill's complete commentary on the whole Bible. Yes, he read that entire series cover to cover during some four to five months. That task alone would require an aggressive speed read, so I asked him a few questions about Gill's writings and doctrinal ideas. I quickly learned that this quiet, but wise and studied man not only read fast, but he also studied what he read intently. He could tell me precisely what Gill believed about various Bible texts, as well as various doctrinal ideas. And he understood what Gill wrote.

You need not be as prolific a reader as this admirable man. Spend some time analyzing the "Down time" you experience daily, those minutes or hours when you simply have nothing to do. How much of the Bible could you read during even a portion of those idle hours in a week? A month? Six months? And could you, like my old friend from my youth, talk to me in technical details about what you read during that time? That is true "Bible study." Let's work at making this approach to our Bibles a faithful habit.

Should we take our personal beliefs to the Bible and look for the passages which we think support them? Or should we go to the Bible as hungry, eager-to-learn children, looking to Scripture to take us by the hand and show us what we need to know, believe, and practice? The outcome--the resultant faith and lifestyle--will be worlds different. Don't be afraid of the Bible. Do trust it. And do believe it when you read it.

Lord bless, Joe Holder

Ignored and Misunderstood Scriptures ([Ro 10:1](#)) Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ([Ro 10:1](#) KJV 1900) Of all people, R. C. Sproul occasionally

reminded his listeners that they needed to be more discerning about their interpretation of “Save” when they read the word in their Bible. He recommended that they pause whenever they encountered the word and ask two questions, “Saved from what?” And “Saved to what?” I heartily agree. Failure to interrogate the word and context of salvation passages leads to much confusion and misunderstanding of Scripture. Example. [Mt 1:21](#), the angel told Joseph that the child to be born of Mary would “...save his people from their sins.” Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is repeatedly magnified as the one and only true Savior of His people. But then we encounter another passage. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. ([1Ti 4:16](#)) Wait. Is Jesus the one true Savior? Or is Timothy the one true Savior? Or is every preacher his own savior and the savior of the people to whom he preaches? There is a contradiction of monumental proportions here that needs to be resolved. If preachers can save people, why did Jesus need to come and die for our sins? If we ask the two questions suggested of [1Ti 4:16](#), we might learn that “Saved from what” and “To what” must be answered differently for this verse than for the verses that claim exclusive Savior status for Jesus. The dilemma is further complicated by Peter’s words to convicted and believing Jews on Pentecost. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. ([Ac 2:40](#)) So now the problem deepens. Is Jesus your exclusive Savior? Is the man who first preached to you your savior? Or are you your own savior? This verse explains itself if we set aside preconceived beliefs and interrogate the text, asking it to teach us instead of trying to rewrite it to our own ideas. Peter did not tell those people on Pentecost to save themselves from eternal judgment, did he? No, he specifically told them to “Save” themselves from a twisted (“Untoward” means twisted; the Greek root for the word is the root for our English word “Scoliosis,” abnormal curvature of the spine.) There is no actual conflict at all between these various passages. The conflict lies in the minds of folks who read the text with preconceived beliefs of salvation by works, by their own actions, instead of salvation from the eternal consequences of our sins by Jesus alone. Do they regard faith as their savior, or do they regard Jesus, the one true object of faith, as their Savior? How does Paul define a “Jew” in Romans? Paul is consistent in his use of words and ideas. How does he view “Jews” or “Israel” in Romans? No need for conjecture, he answers that question for us. For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. ([Ro 2:28-29](#); emphasis added) Paul regarded a “Jew” as a person who has a spiritual relationship with Jesus, not with Abraham. Much nearer the context of [Ro 10:1](#), Paul repeats this point in his prayer for “Israel,” a people whom he describes in the following terms. [Ro 5:1-9:4](#). Who are Israelites. 2. ...to whom pertaineth the adoption. 3. ...and the glory. 4. ...and the covenants. 5. ...and the giving of the law. 6. ...and the service of God. 7. ...and the promises. 8. Whose are the fathers. 9. ...and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. It is logically and contextually impossible to interpret all these descriptions as applicable to unsaved (“Unsaved” in the sense of their eternal or final salvation). However, if we accept Paul’s personal definition of a Jew from [Ro 2:28-29](#), we learn that Paul’s prayer was not for all people who could claim Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their ancestors. Rather, he prayed for all natural Jews who were also “Spiritual” Jews, based on this [Ro 2](#) definition which Paul himself included in the Roman letter. Paul goes on in [Ro 9](#) to tell us that these same Jews for whom he prays are among God’s elect, His chosen “vessels of mercy” whom He (God) has prepared for glory. ([Ro 9:23](#)) One populist objection to God’s election of a special people, designated “Special” by Him because of His love and grace purposed for them from the beginning ([2Ti 1:9](#)), is the claim that “Election” in the New Testament refers to God’s “Election” of Jews over Gentiles, that the idea has no application whatever to Gentiles (Non-Jews). However, Paul directly addresses this errant idea in his teaching. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? ([Ro 9:23-24](#); emphasis added) God’s election to ultimate and final salvation is not a matter of race, but

of grace, and it includes people across the spectrum of superficial human distinction, "...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood (The means He used to redeem His people) out of ("Out of," not all) every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Not Jews only)." ([Re 5:9b](#)) If we appeal to context and allow Paul, in [Ro 10](#), to answer the Sproul questions, what do we learn? For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. ([Ro 10:2-4](#)) Remember the questions. Saved from what? Saved to what? Immediately following Paul's "...heart's desire and prayer to God" point, Paul mentions their ignorant zeal. They know the Lord. They even have a zeal for Him, but they are sadly deficient in their correct knowledge of Him. They proved this point by their rejection of Jesus, God's righteousness in human form. Jesus ended legalism as a form of serving or pleasing God. But these people zealously adhered to Moses and the law, while wholly denying that Jesus was God Incarnate, God in human flesh, putting themselves in this position of need for Paul's prayers. Be honest with yourself. Have you ever at any time in your Christian profession suffered from any degree of ignorant zeal? Carefully read Paul's inspired description of the wicked who know not God, who are not saved. ([Ro 3:9-18](#)) Do you find any hint whatever that these people have any kind of zeal toward God? None, not a word to suggest such a disposition. Let's be clear. These people were not in a good place. They needed Paul's prayer and heart's desire for a better view of God and His righteousness. Ignorance is a dreadful thing, but Scripture doesn't indicate that it is equivalent to being lost and condemned in their sins. You and I are ignorant of so much of God's truth, though pride may well prevent us from honestly confronting and confessing the fact. Be wise. We cannot correct what we do now acknowledge and own. If we pretend that we know everything in the Bible better than anyone else, we entrench ourselves in our own ignorance and pride, no better than these people. Pray and work to be more like the Ethiopian eunuch. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. ([Ac 8:29-31](#)) You and I—no believer—shall ever become so wise and so informed in the Scriptures that we cannot learn from another believer. In my sixty-six years of ministry, I've observed that those who refuse to listen and learn from other believers often manifest fierce pride and think they are the beneficiaries of some form of deluded "Revelation" directly from the Lord. I find so very often that questions or comments from other believers will stir my mind and nudge me to rich gems of truth that I had overlooked. I thank the Lord for His long-suffering toward me, and I thank those dear believers who care enough to ask their questions or to offer their comments. I often caution young preachers. Never speak from the pulpit with your eyes focused on windows, walls, ceilings, or floors. Always maintain careful eye contact with your congregation. Even as you speak to them, you might hear a sermon from the pew to the pulpit that you need more than they need the sermon you attempt to give to them. If we accept Paul's inspired and detailed description of these people in the ninth chapter, we cannot reasonably conclude that these people were lost and in their sins. They were born again, but they needed to be saved from ignorance, from a bad state of mind. Do saved people need to be saved? Indeed they do. 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. ([2Ti 2:10](#); emphasis added. They have eternal glory. They are born again, but they need "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.") Elder Joe Holder