

Religious, Zealous, and Lost
Romans 10:1-4

¹Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ²For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

In today's Bible lesson, Paul lamented the lostness of Israel. The Messiah, Jesus, had come, but most of Israel missed God's greatest gift and work. Paul never gave up on his own countrymen, his fellow Jews. In verse 1, Paul stated that both his desire and prayer were for Israel to be saved in the same way he had been. The Jews were zealous (verse 2) but their zealotry was for the wrong things and in the wrong direction. Their dilemma was aptly and succinctly described in verses 3-4.

There is a temptation for us to stop here and dismiss these four brief verses as not applicable to us today. Paul strictly wrote about an ancient people and time not at all relevant to us today. But, such thinking would be a mistake. All Scripture is profitable. Our task is to take the occasion of Paul's specific writing in these four verses and see what universal principles we might pull out for 2010.

The first implication should be a sense of heavy-heartedness over those who do not know Christ today. There should be within all believers a burden for those who are not part of God's family through Christ Jesus. Remember that Paul's burden was so heavy that he was willing to give up his salvation so Israel would know her Messiah (see Romans 9:3).

The second implication is that our burden should lead to some type of action. Paul preached, taught, wrote and sacrificed for the cause of the gospel. What kind of actions have you personally taken? What have you done so that others might know Jesus? Many Christians will live and die having done virtually nothing to introduce Jesus to their friends. It is not fair to say we are burdened for people who are lost, yet doing nothing to bring them to Christ.

The third implication is a sense of intercession for the lost. Paul declared in verse 1 that it was his prayer for Israel to be saved. As followers of Jesus, we should pray for the salvation of friends and co-workers. Pray for visitors and prospects to our church. Pray for kids

who are involved in our soccer ministry. Someone has said that our prayers of intercession for lost people should be so frequent and faithful that we think their salvation depends completely upon us! Begin praying for a person you know to come to Jesus.

David Jeremiah related an interesting story about intercession. *“George Muller, the famous founder of children’s orphanages in England, prayed for the salvation of two friends for more than sixty years. When asked why he had prayed so long he replied, ‘do you think God would have kept me praying all these years if he did not intend to save them?’ (And yes, they were eventually saved.)”* Could you pray sixty years for someone to come to Christ? How about six months or six weeks?

The fourth implication is encouraging and inviting people to Christ. David Jeremiah noted that Paul ended verses 1-4 with an invitation. Paul consistently invited people to respond to God’s work in Christ. Our invitations today are essential. We can look for ways to invite people to worship services, events, activities and things we do as a church. Any door can be an open door to the gospel. Research consistently shows that people who come to Christ do so because someone they knew well and trusted gave them an invitation.

Paul noted at the end of verse 4 that Christ is at the end of the law. There is Jesus and everything else. But righteousness is found only in Christ.

Applications . . .

1. Pray diligently for someone you know to come to Christ. Maybe share that request with a friend.
2. In the next ten days, extend two invitations to people to worship with you at our church.
3. Pray specifically for our soccer ministry. Ask God to be at work among the children who attend.