



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

## Loving People to Christ

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Romans 10:1-4

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*10 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup>For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup>For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup>For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

*(Pastor prays)*

What a great thing it is to make it your life's ambition not only to grow as a Christian but to make it your life's ambition to focus your efforts on seeing other people come to Christ and to grow in grace. What a great thing for a church to be. To be not only a church that hopes to walk in a right doctrinal line—we certainly want to do that—but also a church that desires to see people come to Christ, to see people grow in grace. You can feel that in Romans.

Take Romans 9 and 10 together. Romans 9 speaks of God's sovereignty in salvation and Romans 10 looks at man's responsibility in salvation. And here in Romans 10 you can feel Paul's burden for his people – the Jews, Israel. Paul is a Gospel-minded man. I want to be a Gospel-minded man and I want you to be Gospel-minded people because...

### **Gospel-Minded People do Gospel-Minded Things**

When I say Gospel, what do I mean? The Gospel is that our Holy God is the creator of the whole universe and everything in it. He created man in His own perfect image, but that image has been disfigured when man sinned, and it created a chasm between God and man and condemned man to death because the penalty for sin is death. Jesus Christ, the son of God, was born of a virgin and lived a perfect life. He willingly gave His life on the cross to cover our sins and provide redemption for man. The Bible says in Romans 10:9, *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him*

*from the dead, you will be saved.* So when I say Gospel I mean the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

And if we are a Gospel-minded people, we will do Gospel-minded things that bring people to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The question is: how do you make sure you are living like a Gospel-minded person? I would like to give you a couple of suggestions and hopefully get them from the Bible. Here's the first one.

### **Connect with the church in spite of differences**

Nobody wants to be in a church that is built on something other than the Gospel. We don't want to be a part of a church because it is in the white part of town with nothing but white people going to it. We don't want to be a part of a church because it is in the wealthy part of town with nothing but the wealthy. Or that it is in the poor part of town or that it is in a part of the town of a different ethnicity. We don't want to be in a church that is built on anything else other than the Gospel.

You see what Paul is doing here in verse 1 with the word "brothers.". In the context, here is Paul writing to a group of Christians who are in Rome. Why is that revolutionary? Well for a couple of reasons. Paul didn't plant the church in Rome. Paul has never met these people. This church doesn't have any reason to listen to what he is saying. Rome is like America is today: it is big and strong and powerful and proud of being Roman. And the people in this church are Gentiles. Paul is a Jew. He is completely different from anybody in that church in Rome. And yet the word here is "*brothers.*".

So what are the marks of a church that you want to be a part of?

- Biblical fidelity – you want a church that believes the Bible, one where the pastor stands up and reads the Bible and talks about the Bible.
- You want a church that provides Gospel clarity. What I mean is, you never assume the Gospel. You actually talk about and get to what the Gospel actually is.
- You want a church that has a love for the brothers and sisters, genuine love, carrying each other's burdens. Love is being involved in each other's lives.

If you are going to be a Gospel-minded person you need to do Gospel-minded things and that means loving each other regardless of the fact that you have come from different backgrounds.

We don't care about that here. What we care about is that the Gospel pulls us together. We connect with the church in spite of our differences.

### **Develop a love-filled burden for your lost friends**

Think of *one*. We have a 30-day guide that will help you pray for that one person. If we are not careful, we get busy with life and forget to have a burden for a person who we know personally who doesn't have a relationship with Jesus.

Let's look at the passage. **10** *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.* How are people saved? By putting their faith in Jesus. Desire. That has a real positive feel. It is genuinely wanting the best, a blessing, wishing them well. And the greatest good for any person is that they know Jesus. We want people to succeed and be happy but, above that, we want them to know Jesus. You hear Paul's heart in this passage.

Ask God that you develop a love-filled burden for your lost friend. It may get uncomfortable, but your heart's desire is that they be saved. If we are going to be Gospel-minded people and do Gospel-minded things we can't get (allow ourselves to get) too busy to develop a love-filled burden for your lost friends. But it takes something else, a third thing:

### **Plead with God for your lost friend**

Let's go again to the passage and look at the emotion in verse 1. **10** *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.* They are in need, they are drowning, they are lost, and they are in need of prayer. That word "prayer" is not the normal word for prayer. It's the word "anguish." It takes the meaning of begging, but this is not hopeless begging. He prayed because he believed God could do it! Let's not lose heart in our prayers. Plead with God for your lost friend.

I can't remember exactly where I heard a preacher say that there are a couple of things we should be doing. The first one is that we should never forget God's wrath. Remembering the wrath of God will put urgency in your prayer. John 3:36 says, *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

We need to trust the sufficiency of Christ. The death of Christ, the blood of Jesus, will cover the sins of absolutely anyone who repents. He can and will save the worst of sinners.

Pray for conviction. Pray that your lost friend may not live comfortably but that she will want to know God. Pray that the eyes of her heart are enlightened.

Think deeply of God's grace given to you in Christ. What kind of grace is extended to you and keeps covering your sins? Envision the reward for your friend at the end of the road. How joyful that will be.

Pray God will increase your love for your lost friend. All of us have friends who are not in the faith. Church can dominate so much of your time that you may not remember that you have lost friends.

Let's say you already have a burden for a friend. Act on that burden. Say something. Make a call. Walk across the street. Act on that burden.

Don't give up praying for your prodigal. Plead with God for your lost friend.

### **Empathize with discernment**

<sup>2</sup> *For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.* Let's deal with the word "witness" or "testimony." Paul is saying that he remembers what it is like to be lost. Have empathy but also discernment. They have a zeal for God that seems like a good thing except it is something without knowledge. So put those two words together, zeal and knowledge. A true Christian should have both. Knowledge without zeal and zeal without knowledge are both bad. Few things are deader than doctrine without passion, except passion without the Gospel.

Paul is saying they have zeal without knowledge, commitment without reflection, enthusiasm without understanding. They have religion but are far from God. So how are they far from God? They don't know the Gospel. Dean Inerra wrote a book called **The Unsaved Christian**. It's disturbing because it sounds so much like many of the churches many of us have known. People come up to the altar, assume the Gospel but nothing happens inside. Be careful that you don't have so much church but don't know Jesus. Don't let church be the driver that draws you to a relationship with God; let it be Jesus that drives you to God. Empathize with discernment.

### **Know the real reasons your friend isn't saved**

<sup>3</sup> *For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.* So, why did they not submit to God's righteousness? Jesus

Christ is the righteousness of God given to anyone who might believe. You stand condemned without Jesus but with Jesus you receive the righteousness of God.

There are two reasons why they do not have the righteousness of God in verse 3. They are ignorant of the righteousness of God, ignorant of the Gospel. They had all the religion in the world but just didn't know Jesus. You can sound a whole lot like a Christian and just believe in karma, "I'll do something for someone, and it will come back around." That's not grace, that's a works-based salvation. The Gospel is a grace-based salvation that says I am absolutely desperate, I have no hope or righteousness of my own, I need what God has given me in Jesus.

They don't know the Gospel but there is another reason in verse 3. The second reason is that they don't think they need Jesus. *<sup>3</sup>For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.* They were seeking to establish their own righteousness. They don't think they need Jesus, but don't forget that we believe that God saves us by grace through faith in what Christ has done and nothing of our own.

The Bible teaches us that God is good and holy and created everything including mankind, all of us in this room. You were created in the image of God. That image of God within you and me has been disfigured by our own sin to the degree that we are separated from God. Jesus Christ, who was fully man and is fully God, lived perfectly, earning righteousness that you and I can't. Then Jesus took the wrath of God in the place of sinners. The wages of sin is death, and Jesus died on the cross for us. Then God raised Him from the dead, He ascended into heaven; and He sits at the right hand of God and rules the entire universe.

We can never work our way to Heaven, but the work of righteousness has been done in Christ. The work of salvation has been done in Christ, so what is left for you is to believe. To believe means turning from sin, knowing that it is wrong, and turning to Christ, believing that Jesus saves. You need to know the real reasons why your friend isn't saved. It's not because they think you are judgmental or that their feelings got hurt in church. The real reasons are that they either don't understand the Gospel, or they want to do it themselves.

Let's go to verse 4. We need to ...

**Have a clear and joyful grasp on the Gospel.**

<sup>4</sup> *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.* What is the Gospel? We need to look at it three ways:

- We need to make sure we are centered on Jesus. We need to get people to Jesus, His life, death and resurrection where there is forgiveness and hope and love and grace. The text says that Christ is the end of the law. If the Law of Moses is a road, that road is designed to take you somewhere, and that road ends at Jesus. Jesus didn't come to get rid of the law. The law tells us the holiness of God. Jesus came to fulfill it. Our Gospel must be centered on Christ.
- Our Gospel must be indiscriminate about the nature of salvation. Look at the text: *to everyone who believes*. This knocks down all the differences between us. Whether a Jew or Gentile, any color, drug addicts and adulterers, someone who has a homosexual lifestyle. Name your sin and this joyful text tells us that the blood of Jesus covers it. There's this indiscriminate nature to salvation.
- One more piece of it is that we must come by faith - *to everyone who believes*. You can't save yourselves, but God will save you when you look to Christ.

For those of you who are not Christian, you can get right with God through faith in Jesus Christ as your righteousness. Trust Christ as king and He will dethrone your sin. Christ alone is our righteousness.

For the Christians here, there are people in your life who need this message. You have prayed for them; don't stop. Don't stop lifting her up. Keep at it. If you are thinking that you don't know if you belong in this church or not, the only thing I can tell you is that God has saved every sinner in here. He has done it by their faith in Jesus and He will save you if you will come to Christ.

*(Pastor prays)*