

A Biblical Burden for our Day

Romans 10: 1-4

It is evident in these verses that Paul had a burden for the urgent need in Israel. He was surrounded by those who were devoutly religious, and yet hopelessly lost. They had a zeal for the law and followed a strict adherence to it, but could not see Jesus as the Messiah or their need for a relationship with him. John Phillips stated it this way: “*The great enterprise of the Jew was to build for himself an edifice of righteousness in his own strength based on the edicts of Sinai – an utterly impossible task. Righteousness is to be found not at Sinai but at Calvary; it lies not in the acceptance of a precept but of a Person; not in servitude to commandments but in submission to Christ.*” ¹

It doesn't appear that the average Christian possess the burden that Paul had for those around us. He saw the need of Israel and we need to see the need of America. There is a need for foreign missions, and I thank God for those who are taking the message around the world, but there is a great need here at home as well.

According to the NAMB website, 2009 figures put the population of the Southeast at 103,313,845. An estimated 13.7 million Southern Baptist live here. However, of the over 103 million people living in the Southeast, 67 million of them are lost. That translates to 64% of the population. The NCBSC website estimates that there are 5.6 million lost people here in North Carolina, more than 50% of our population.

These are staggering figures. We are surrounded by people who are without Christ, lost in their sin, and headed toward hell. We must see the need and accept our responsibilities to reach them. I want to look at the text and consider our obligation as we think on: [A Biblical Burden for our Day](#).

I. An Urgent Prayer (1) – [Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.](#) Let's consider the aspects of this prayer.

A. It was Sincere – Paul was not half-hearted in his burden for Israel. It was not something that he thought of on occasion, but he was genuinely burdened for them. He continually carried a burden for the lost of Israel and desired that they come to know the Lord.

- He knew the snare they were trapped in. He too had lived the life of a Pharisee, keeping the law to the letter and assuming that would translate into acceptance with God.
- We need to see people as they are and admit their need. We need a burden that is sincere not just superficial. It must be more than something we talk about in Sunday School. We need to be sincere in prayer!

B. It was Substantial – Paul was not seeking a small thing. He was burdened for the entire nation of Israel, literally thousands upon thousands of people. He served One who was able and Paul was not in the business of doubting God’s ability. He had the attitude of the Hebrew boys and Daniel. His was not a “little god” mentality, but one of a mighty, big God.

- We need to pray in a substantial way. Somehow we have reached the assumption that America has gone too far, that revival and salvation are unattainable for many. We need a “Big God” mentality!

C. It was Specific – I am confident that there were physical, social, and even economic needs in that day, but they weren’t the focus of Paul’s prayer. His desire was that Israel might be saved. Paul knew that was the greatest need and he sought the Lord for that need.

- I fear that we have grown accustomed to praying in a casual, generic way. We need to learn to be specific when we pray. We need to address individual needs before the Lord, calling out the names of those we are concerned about. We need to pray that God will use us directly in their lives. We need to get beyond the physical and social needs, although they are important, and touch heaven for the needs of lost souls!

I. An Urgent Prayer (1)

II. An Undeniable Passion (2) – For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Here Paul acknowledges the zeal of Israel. What can we discover about their zeal? Notice:

A. It was Prominent – Paul bore record of their zeal. It was something that he recognized and was very evident in their lives. They may have been guilty of many things, but a lack of zeal wasn’t one of them.

- Many among us today are very zealous about certain causes. They live their lives dedicated to the things in which they believe. Commitment is to be admired, but sadly many are committed to the wrong things.
- The Jews present a challenge for the average Christian today. How does our zeal compare to the zeal they possessed? Could it be said that we have a genuine zeal for the things of God?

B. It was Incompetent – They had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. The word knowledge means “*correct, full, complete; an experiential knowledge of truth.*” The Jews were zealous about their traditions and adherence to the law, but they lacked a fullness of the things

of God. They only understood in part. They embraced the law of Moses, but rejected the Son of God. Their passion was evident, and it was consuming, but it lacked the fullness of God's grace.

- Many today are sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. They see God as One who loves, but they lack the understanding of accountability to the righteous demands of a holy God. Few ever grasp the fullness of God. They assume that their good deeds will secure a place in heaven, lacking the knowledge of salvation through the shed blood of Christ. Many believe in an eternal heaven, but refuse to accept that Christ is the only way to achieve it.

I. An Urgent Prayer (1)

II. An Undeniable Passion (2)

III. An Unknown Peril (3) – 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. Here Paul deals with the peril that the Jews faced unknowingly. Consider:

A. Their Ignorance (3a) – This is tied directly to their lack of knowledge. They had embraced the law and sought to carry it out to the fullest. They even imposed other man made laws and rituals in an effort to achieve the righteousness that God demanded. They assumed that living according to the law was good enough. They did not fully understand God's holiness.

- A lot of people are in the same condition today. We are surrounded by people who believe that a good, moral life is all that is required. They think that if their good deeds outweigh the bad, then they will be accepted of God. These clearly are ignorant of the righteousness of God.

- God's righteous standard stands as the measure of our merit. In ourselves we can never achieve a level of righteousness that is acceptable. That is only obtained through the righteousness of Christ being applied to our account. We are only worthy through Him!

B. Their Diligence (3b) – They continually strove to establish their own righteousness. They were convinced that righteousness could be achieved through keeping the law and they were persistent in that pursuit. They were literally seeking to work their way to heaven.

- That is likely the biggest misconception among men even today. As we've already established, many feel that they will be judged based on their works. They assume that as long as they are busy doing good deeds, they will be accepted of God.

- Salvation is not something we do, it has already been done. Christ provided for our redemption upon the cross. We can't work for it, earn it, or even deserve it. It is a free gift, trusting in Christ and Christ alone!

C. Their Arrogance (3c) – The religious Jews refused to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. They were descendants of Abraham, the chosen people. They were adhering to the law. They kept the holy ordinances. They saw no need or benefit in Christ. They refused to submit to the doctrine of salvation through the cross. They refused to believe that they needed anything other than the keeping of the law.

- Really all disobedience is a result of arrogance. Those who refuse to accept Christ as the only means of salvation are in essence declaring that they don't need Him. They somehow believe that they can make it on their own.
- The Bible is clear that submitting to the authority and provision of Christ is essential to salvation. There is no other way. It isn't achieved through good works, church membership, baptism, or even knowledge of Scripture. Salvation is of the Lord. We must submit to Him in salvation.

I. An Urgent Prayer (1)

II. An Undeniable Passion (2)

III. An Unknown Peril (3)

IV. An Unequaled Provision (4) – For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Paul shares the provision that is available to all, Jew and Gentile alike. Consider this unequalled provision.

A. It is Final – The Jews continued to seek righteousness through adherence to the law, but Christ is the fulfillment of the law. He accomplished what the law never could. The law could not save. It could only point toward Christ and condemn our sin. Christ fully satisfied the righteous demands of God. Where the law was insufficient, Christ was sufficient. There will never need to be another sacrifice. Salvation was provided fully and completely at Calvary!

B. It is Universal – Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone that believes! This glorious salvation is available for all men, Jew and Greek alike. It is not based on our works or merit, but freely offered to all who will receive it.

- Aren't you glad that salvation wasn't reserved for the Jews only? I am glad that it is a "whosoever will" salvation. All who have ever lived have the opportunity of knowing the fullness of God's grace in salvation through His Son!

C. It is Conditional – Salvation is available to everyone that believeth. That is the key that Paul emphasized to the Jews and all who would read these precious words. Salvation requires faith. We must believe upon Christ and His finished work upon the cross.

- Many remain in their sin because they refuse to believe. It is so simple that a child can receive it and yet many will not believe. I can't explain it all. I certainly don't understand it all, but praise the Lord I believe it all.
- If you have never been saved, you just need to believe. Come to Christ is faith, believing that He died for your sin. Trust Him to do what you cannot and He will save your soul.

Like Paul we need a burden for the lost around us. Many are deceived by the doctrines of men. Many are seeking to work out their salvation in hopes that good deeds are all that is required. May we pray that God will touch their hearts and reveal their need? May we seek the Lord in prayer for their salvation? Let us be willing to be used of God to share our faith with those who do not know Christ!

If you stand in need of salvation, Jesus is ready to save. You just need to come to Him by faith and believe.

¹ Phillips, John. *Exploring Romans: An Expository Commentary.*

Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2002.