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Romans 10:1-13 – *Salvation for Anyone*

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As we start this morning, I'm going to ask you to do something:

Bring to mind someone you love—

A friend, spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, son or daughter, or co-worker—

Someone that you care deeply about...

Who does not have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Picture them for a second:

What are they wearing?

Where are they?

What are they doing?

Please, keep this person with you as we engage with God's Word.

### Romans 10:1-13

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

<sup>5</sup>Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." <sup>6</sup>But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup>"or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup>But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: <sup>9</sup>If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. <sup>11</sup>As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup>For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup>for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

Before we get deep into doctrines of the Christian faith...

I want us to first capture and appreciate the emotion behind this passage.

Paul isn't writing a dry textbook...

Simply trying to communicate information to his readers.

Here's a passionate man first telling us of something that is very near to him:

“My heart's desire...”

“From the very center of who I am...”

“Deep in my bones”;

“My prayer to God...”

“My request, my supplication, my plea”;

“Is that the Israelites may be saved.”

These are the people Paul is picturing:

His Jewish friends, relatives, and fellow Pharisees;

The people from which he comes;

The Hebrews;

His loved-ones who don't have a relationship with Christ.

Paul's longing for their salvation becomes the heartbeat of this passage.

*His* passion is that the Israelites would be saved.

Because right now, the Israelites are missing a crucial piece in their relationship with God...

And it's preventing their salvation.

What is it?

It's not as if they don't know God...

After all, they're the people—

Of all the people in the world—

That God chooses to reveal himself to.

“Theirs is the covenants, the promises and the patriarchs.” (9:4-5)

It’s not as if they’re turning and worshiping other gods...

The Israelites have done this throughout their history, but not now.

And it’s not as if their devotion and passion for God is waning either...

They are great about upholding the laws of sacrifice, the laws of eating, laws of resting, laws concerning festivals, and everything else.

In fact, Paul says that, “they are *zealous* for God.”

They have a sincere fervor for God.

They want to honor God in all they do.

The Israelites are enthusiastic/eager for God...

Yet, they are off target.

Needing a *major* course correction.

Because the way they’re seeking to be in relationship with God...

Is not the way that God wants.

They are zealous for God...

But their zeal is “without knowledge...” (10:2)

They’re ignorant of how God wants to operate in their lives.

It’s preventing their salvation...

And it’s tearing up Paul from the inside out...

Watching his people perish, separated from the God they’re crazy about.

“My heart’s desire and prayer is that my beloved Israel would be saved.”

So, what’s going on with Israel?

Imagine that you book a trip to the San Juan Islands.

You plan a boat tour in the waters between Victoria and Washington State...

And the tour promises a “*magical* adventure.”

You expect to see Osprey, Bald Eagles, maybe a Humpback Whale...that’s nice...

But what will really make the trip “magical” for you is seeing a pod of Orcas.

This would cross an item off your bucket list.

You're out on the boat...

Enjoying the cool, salty air and the warm summer sun...

Allowing yourself to rise up and down with the boat's motion on the waves.

You're scanning the waters attentively for nearly an hour—

Thinking you'll be the first one to spot that unmistakable large, black dorsal fin—

When all of a sudden, the captain calls out in excitement in unidentifiable words.

Is the moment you've been waiting for?!

You stand up and look around...

Where are they?

Where are the Orcas?

Port side? Starboard side?

Come on captain!

And then you see it...

Not an Orca, but the legendary Kraken...

The giant sea monster thought only to exist in folklore.

It must be some 75 feet long...

Absolutely incredible...*magical* we could say.

But you sit back down...disappointed...

Scanning the waters again for the Orcas...

The goal of your trip.

An imperfect analogy...

But hopefully you get the point.

Israel's focus was the law:

Upholding the law...

Doing everything in their power to live by the law...

It was by the law that they sought to be in relationship with God.

Now, God did set up the law to mediate the relationship between God and his people.

The law was good and necessary...

But the law itself was never the point.

Just as the promise of the trip was never the pod of Orcas—

It was a “magical adventure”—

So the goal of the law was never the law itself...

The goal was God...

Life and relationship in God.

But the Israelites got stuck on the law...

Their focus was fixed on the law.

This wouldn't have been bad if they could have kept the law perfectly—

Living by every single command laid out in it—

Then they would have had relationship with God.

But they *didn't* keep the law.

No one has ever kept the law and lived by its requirements.

Attaining the goal of the law—

Having a relationship with God—

Is impossible through the law...

It's impossible through “doing” the law.

But Israel got stuck on it.

Israel was so focused on the law that they missed the new way God was working.

And this way is Jesus Christ.

Who is called the culmination of the law...

Or the fulfillment of the law.

Because God himself came down to live with us—

That is Jesus from Nazareth...

Jesus is God—

And he did live a perfect life.

He was obedient not just to the letter of the law...

But to the heart of the law...

Loving God with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength...

And loving those around him perfectly...

Even his enemies and those who are hard to love.

Jesus lived and followed God exactly how we were supposed to follow God.

He met all of the requirements of the law.

Then the great exchange happened...

Where he gives his perfect obedience to us.

Jesus gives up his life on the cross so that his righteousness—

His perfect obedience to God and God's law—

Would be given to us!

He takes our rap sheet and gives us his perfect record.

Now we are in relationship with God—

Not through the law—

But through Christ.

And all that is needed is to give ourselves to this way...

To take our focus off of the water...

To stop looking for something else...

And realize that what we need—

What we've been looking for—

Is right here.

Jesus Christ is near...

The word of salvation is near.

We don't have to plumb the ocean depths...

We don't have to scale the highest mountain...

We don't need to *do* anything in order to be in relationship with God.

Because it has already been done!

What we couldn't do...

God *did* for us in Jesus.

This is what Paul wants for his people, the Israelites.

His longing is for them to confess that the saving work of Christ is for them.

To confess it with their mouth and believe it in their heart...

That God loves them so much that he himself came down and did what was necessary.

Give yourself up—

Submit to God's way...

Surrender to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

It doesn't matter who you are...

And it doesn't matter what you've done...

The Israelites' course may be way off...

Our course may be way off...

But God is gracious...

And he has made a way for us to come back.

This is Paul's desire for the people he loves...

That they would be saved.

Do you still have someone you care about in your mind?

Are you still holding them in your heart?

Someone who doesn't have a relationship with Jesus.

I wonder where they're at:

Maybe they're "spiritual but not religious."

Believing that something is out there but not knowing what.

Maybe they jump from one belief to another...

Thinking that it doesn't matter *what* they believe...

As long as they believe it sincerely.

Or maybe they do believe in God...

But their focus hasn't made it to Jesus.

Maybe their eyes are still fixed on the water looking for something else.

Maybe they are still focused on doing the right thing...

Trying with all of their effort to be good enough...

Still trying to *earn* their relationship with God...

Missing the grace of God in Jesus.

Or maybe your loved-one just doesn't seem to care...

God, religion, spirituality...it doesn't resonate with them.

They just don't want to hear anything you have to say.

What do we do with our loved-ones?

How does this passage in Romans instruct us?

First, we pray to God for them.

This is what Paul does:

“My heart's desire and prayer to God...is that they would be saved.”

This may seem strange coming off of last week talking about divine election...

People only entering into a relationship with God by *his* choice...

The teaching that not everyone is a part of God's family.

“Why should we pray for people if it's not up to us?” you may ask.

Because we're given the model of it in Scripture.

We see it here in Romans:

Paul just said that not all of ethnic Israel will be saved...

Yet he's praying that they will be saved.

He doesn't know whom God has chosen...

But he is going to plead to God on behalf of his people.

We also see Jesus praying this same way:

In the upper room in John 17:20 Jesus says:

“I pray for those who *will* believe in me through their message...”

So, we regularly/daily hold up our loved ones in prayer...

Specifically praying that they would be saved.

(see BLESS prayer below for a way to pray)

Second, we must be rooted in the message we've been given.

When God opens up a door of opportunity for us to have a conversation with our loved ones—

Or as they see us living out our lives—

Our message, verbal or in action, better be communicating the way to God.

It had better be communicating that Jesus is the way.

If you're not sure what exactly the gospel is...

Sink into God's word.

We've been given the gospel message in many different ways in Romans these last several weeks:

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.” (Rom 3:24)

“God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” (5:8)

“There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because Jesus set me free from the law of sin and death.” (8:1)

“Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ.” (8:39)

“Christ is the fulfillment of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” (10:4)

The message we've been given to proclaim and live is all about salvation through Christ.

Those who believe in him will not be disappointed. (10:11)

Everyone who calls on him will be saved. (10:13)

That's *your* loved-one...

Your son, daughter, grandchild, boyfriend/girlfriend, or co-worker.

My loved-one...

My friend, my relative.

That's us.

“Everyone who calls on him will be saved.”

May this be our heartbeat...

May this be our passion...

May this be our prayer.

All to the glory of God.

Amen.

One way of praying for those who don't know the Lord is using the acronym BLESS:

B - body

L - labor

E - emotions

S - social

S - spiritual