

Paul's desire and prayer for Israel

Romans 10

Tim Anderson 10/11/24

Zeal is a word
that I would hazard a guess that not many Australians resonate with.
Are you zealous?
Even if you know what zealous means,
I think that most Australians
would prefer to describe themselves as laid back.
Being laid back is pretty much a national stereotype.
Not too flustered about anything.
So long as there is beer in the fridge
and I don't have to work on the long weekend,
I'm pretty comfortable with life.
Wary of people who get too obsessive
about their religious or political views.
Ah they're just tweedledum and tweedledee mate.
It doesn't matter who's in government,
life goes on pretty much the same.
I'm happy for people to be religious mate,
I don't really understand it.
But so long as they're happy to live and let live,
then it's all cool.
Just don't go stuffing anything down my throat.
That would get my back up.
I hope you can spot the average Australian in those descriptions.
Laid back is about the opposite of zealous.
Someone who is zealous is really driven to pursue their goal or their cause.

And if you think about,

Zeal is present in Australian culture.

We just don't focus on it.

So the footy supporters might call it proud passionate and paid up, but it wouldn't be wrong to describe them as zealous.

Gym culture is moving the next generation of Australians more in the zealous direction.

Zealous about getting their bodies in shape and their nutrient intake optimised.

So it's only true that we are laid back about certain subjects.

God however is a subject that Australians are definitely laid back about. Maybe not in Lakemba.

But in the sort of places you think about when I say Australia, we are very laid back about God.

One of the things about being laid back about God is that there is a premium placed on sincerity.

A typical Australian attitude would be,

"I don't believe that there are right and wrong religions.

So long as you believe what you believe in sincerely, that's what matters."

Well Paul is going to disagree with Australian culture at every point here.

He will say that it's good to be zealous,

but there is right and wrong,

and unless you get it right,

then you are wasting your time.

He begins,

10:1 "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved."

That's very similar to where he began last week,

where he said that he wished he were cut off himself

for the sake of his fellow Israelites.

The difference this time is that he says that he's praying for them.

You might think after Paul's exposition

of God's election of those he's chosen in chapter 9

that there would be no point in praying for the Israelites to be saved.

God chose Isaac but not Ishmael.

He chose Jacob but not Esau.

What's the point of praying when he has already chosen?

I'm not going to try to explain to you how it works

that God both chooses who he has mercy on

and we need to pray for the salvation of those who don't yet believe.

I said last week,

it's hard to get your head around God being sovereign

and humans being responsible at the same time.

It hasn't got any easier in the last week.

But the apostle Paul understands that God chooses.

And he prays for his fellow countrymen.

He does both.

So should we.

Why does he pray for them?

10:2 "For I can testify about them

that they are zealous for God,

but that their zeal is not based on knowledge."

He does not say,

"They are zealous, they are sincere.

I'm sure they will be ok."

He says that they are zealous and sincere

but because their zeal is based on ignorance

they need to be saved.

In their ignorance, their zeal is just digging the hole deeper.

I knew a lady once who was convinced

that natural remedies would deal with her cancer.
She was totally zealous about it.
Up until about two days before her cancer killed her.
Zeal not based on knowledge is positively dangerous.

What did the Israelites not know?

10:3 "Since they did not know the righteousness of God
and sought to establish their own,
they did not submit to God's righteousness."

What they were missing

was an understanding of the righteousness of God.

It's not that they didn't know what righteousness was.

Righteousness is having right standing in God's sight.

They knew that.

They just didn't know where to get it.

They were ignorant of where to find God's righteousness.

So they thought,

"I'll just make up my own way of earning righteousness."

I'll do it my way.

It's so very Australian.

It's also arrogant.

God decides how we can obtain righteousness.

If we want to tell God how to run the universe,

that would be arrogant.

They did not submit to God's righteousness.

That is, God told them where they needed to find righteousness,

but they refused to get righteousness from where God told them to.

Righteousness can only be obtained from the Lord Jesus.

That's how God has made it.

If you say, "I'm not going to get righteousness

from the only place God told me I can get it."

That would be disobedient.

They were ignorant, arrogant and disobedient.
Not a good combination.
There is only one source of righteousness.
That was true for the Israelites.
It's true for us.

10:4 "Christ is the culmination of the law
so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."
Everything in the law points to Jesus.
The creation points to him because the universe was created through him.
The temple points to him because he is the presence of God among us.
The sacrifices point to him because he is the perfect sacrifice.
The king points to him because he is the great king.
The wisdom literature points to him because he is the wisdom of God.
Everything points to Jesus.
And God has set things up
so that righteousness is obtained by faith in Jesus
and only by faith in Jesus.

There is an option that many people take.
They look for righteousness by doing stuff.
10:5 "Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the law:
"The person who does these things will live by them."
That's a failed project.
It's not possible.
Israel demonstrated that for 1500 years.
If you've been trying to be right with God by what you do,
then today is the day to decide
that you will obtain the righteousness that comes through faith.
It is actually possible to sit in church for decades
and never quite understand where to obtain righteousness.
To keep looking for it in doing stuff

instead of through faith in Jesus.
If that's been you, don't delay.
Trust in Jesus and become a child of God.
My heart's desire and prayer for you is that you would be saved.

What does true righteousness look like?

10:6 "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."

In other words you don't have to go on some quest to find Jesus in heaven.
You don't need to meditate until your mind transports you to heaven.
You don't need to develop a special heavenly consciousness.
No. Jesus has come down from heaven.

God came to find you.
He met you where you were at in his Son.

Neither do you need to say,
10:7 "Who will descend to the deep?"
that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

In other words we don't need to win the battle against evil.
Muslim people try to obtain righteousness by a pilgrimage to Mecca.
When they get to Mecca,
they throw stones at a pillar that represents the devil.
They win a victory against the devil to try to obtain righteousness.
But that's pointless.

I don't think the devil feels particularly beaten
by people throwing stones at a pillar that some guy in the sixth century
randomly decided represented him.

We don't need to do that.
Jesus has already beaten the devil.
We don't need to bring Christ up from the dead
because he has already risen.

The work has been done.

You just need to put your faith in it.

What does it mean to put your faith in Jesus?

10:9 "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."

Your mouth represents what you will publicly own.

If you declare it publicly, then other people can hold you accountable to what you've said. That's important.

Jesus doesn't want people who follow him in secret.

But as well as declaring it with your mouth, you need to believe it in your heart.

The heart represents the place where you make your decisions.

It's possible to declare things with your mouth that you aren't totally committed to in your heart.

You might be just trying to keep someone else happy.

You might be trying to get someone to marry you.

I've heard of that happening before.

People declaring their love for Jesus so that their partner will marry them.

We need to both declare it and believe it.

What is the it we need to declare and believe?

Jesus is the risen Lord.

He is Lord.

That means he is the ruler over everything including me.

If you say that Jesus is Lord,

you are saying he has the right to decide how you live your life.

You are giving up control over how you live and saying, "Jesus I will do things your way".

And he is risen.

That means he's not just a guy

who taught a good moral system that we can follow.

He is the one who has defeated the devil on the cross.
He is the one who has achieved a righteousness that we cannot achieve.
And he is the one who lives to apply that work to us.
Jesus is the risen Lord.

Paul has been explaining what it means to be a Christian.
What it means to put your faith in Jesus.
He's been doing this to show where Israel needed to put its faith.
But how are they going to do it?
How are people around us in Hastings going to put their faith in Jesus?
There is only one way.
We'll live good lives
and they will be attracted the Lord Jesus by the quality of our lives.
Is that right?
No. That's not what he says.
It might be a good addition.
But the number one thing is simple.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
But for them to call on the Lord, they will have to believe in him.
For them to believe in him, they will have to hear the good news of Jesus.
And to hear the good news of Jesus someone will have to speak it to them.
And people will only speak the good news of Jesus if God sends them.
If we want people in Hastings to put their faith in Jesus,
then we will have to speak it to them.
Who is God sending to Hastings if it is not us?
I mean I guess he could motivate some Nigerians to come to Australia
and bring the good news to Hastings.
But there are already people here who have their faith in Jesus.
Really that job belongs to us.
We must speak the good news.
If you don't hear about the righteousness that comes by faith,

you can't put your faith in it.
The message has to be spoken.

There was an election in America this week.

Did you notice that?

It was hard to miss.

One of the things they worked out from the voting
is that people believe their friends more than they believe celebrities.
If Beyonce and Taylor Swift tell you who to vote for people say,
"Yeah whatever".

Even people who are mad Taylor Swift groupies
are not interested in having Tay Tay tell them how to vote.

But if their friends tell them something,
they believe their friends.

It's quite counter intuitive in our celebrity obsessed culture.

But it's something Christians could have told them years ago.

I found out this week that Lord Nelson,
the great admiral of the Battle of Trafalgar was a Christian.

Do you think if I went down to HMAS Cerberus
and told them Nelson was a Christian so you should be one too
they would fall over themselves becoming Christians?

Not at all.

But if someone they serve with on a ship is a Christian,
and that person shares the gospel message with them,
then there is a far great chance they will come to faith.

The message has to be spoken and we believe our peers.

We have run and continue to run

lots of ministries to show love in our church.

We've run Trinity Tucker, Kids Hope, the High School breakfast,
a craft group, an Op Shop.

Obviously there is a place for showing love for its own sake.

But it should not surprise us
that the people we have baptised or are baptising this year
are people who have done Christianity Explored.
Because that is a context
where the righteousness that comes by faith is explained.
The good news is spoken.
Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
But for them to call on the Lord, they will have to believe in him.
For them to believe in him, they will have to hear the good news of Jesus.
And to hear the good news of Jesus someone will have to speak it to them.

Now like any good evangelical minister,
I'm going to use Romans 10
to encourage the congregation to share the good news.
But Paul is actually going in a different direction.
He is explaining to his readers
how it is that Israel did not all come to faith.
10:16 "But not all the Israelites accepted the good news."
It wasn't that Israel didn't hear it.
Faith comes from hearing the message
and the message is heard through the word about Christ.
Did Israel hear the message?
Paul says yes they did absolutely.
He's probably referring to the teaching of Jesus
and the preaching of the apostles.
The message of Jesus was proclaimed to Israel.

But what happened when the message was preached?
Well Paul's experience was that non Jews
were far more enthusiastic recipients of the message
than the Jews were.
You can read the book of Acts.

He went from city to city.

He preached first in the synagogue to the Jews.

Generally speaking that lasted not very long before he got kicked out.

And then he preached the message to the rest of the city.

Paul says you can actually find this foretold in the Old Testament.

10:19 "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation;

I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."

Point is that the Israelites will see others coming to faith

and receiving God's favour.

And they will get jealous and eventually come to faith as well.

Well there will be more of that next week,

so I won't spoil the suspense of chapter 11 for you today.

But it is a reality check for us.

Just because the gospel message is proclaimed

doesn't mean that people will always respond.

They can't respond if we don't proclaim it.

So we must proclaim it.

But when we do,

some hearts will be hard.

Some will not respond.

In the end that's not up to us.

God chose Jacob and not Esau.

God chose Isaac and not Ishmael.

We proclaim the message faithfully

and those whom God chooses will respond.

Let's pray that Holy Trinity Hastings would faithfully proclaim
the righteousness that comes by faith.