

ROMANS 10:1-4

WHAT ARE YOU TRUSTING?

A 5-DAY DEVOTIONAL

*"For Christ is
the end of the law
for righteousness to
everyone who believes."*

ROMANS 10:4

TRUTH • GRACE • COMPASSION • CHRIST



MY ONE

*One person I will
pray for this month.*

A 5-Day Devotional on Romans 10:1-4 • Pastor John Forthman

Day 1 - Who Is On Your Heart?

Scripture: Romans 10:1 - *"Brothers, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."*

Reflection

Before Paul tells us what Israel has gotten wrong, he tells us how much he loves them. That matters.

Paul is about to say some difficult things. His fellow Israelites have pursued righteousness in the wrong way. They have stumbled over Christ. They have zeal for God, but their zeal is not according to knowledge.

Yet Paul doesn't speak about them with anger or contempt. His heart aches for them. "My heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."

Paul's concern doesn't begin with an argument he wants to win. It begins with people he longs to see saved. That is where evangelism begins. It is easy to become frustrated with people who do not believe as we do. We may complain about their choices, shake our heads at the direction of the world, or wonder why they cannot see what seems so clear to us. But frustration alone will never lead someone to Jesus.

Paul shows us another way. His concern for those who are far from Christ becomes compassion, and his compassion leads him to prayer.

Before Paul speaks about them, he speaks to God for them. And perhaps that is where we need to begin too.

Who is on your heart?

Think of one person in your life who needs Jesus. Maybe it is a family member, friend, neighbor, coworker, or someone you have known for years. You may have talked with them about faith before. You may not have said anything yet.

Begin with prayer.

Ask God to work in their heart. Ask Him to give you opportunities to love them well. Ask Him for wisdom to know when to speak and when simply to listen.

And don't only ask God to change them. Ask Him to change you. Ask for greater compassion, patience, and love. Ask God to help you see this person not as a project to fix, but as someone He deeply loves.

Evangelism begins when God gives us His heart for people. So today, write down the name of your one and begin praying.

Questions for Reflection

- Who is one person God has placed on my heart?
- Have I been praying faithfully for that person?
- How can I show them the love of Christ this week?

Prayer: Lord, place someone on my heart who needs to know Jesus. Give me compassion for them and teach me to pray faithfully. Help me love them well and see them through Your eyes. Amen.

Day 2 - Sincere, But Wrong

Scripture: Romans 10:2 - *"For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."*

Reflection

Israel's problem was not a lack of sincerity. Paul says they had zeal for God. They cared deeply about their faith. They were passionate about honoring God and serious about their religious lives.

But Paul identifies a problem: their zeal was "not according to knowledge." They were sincere, but they were wrong.

That's uncomfortable for us because we live in a culture that places tremendous value on sincerity. We often hear some version of, "As long as you really believe it," or, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere."

But sincerity cannot make something true.

Imagine getting on the highway and sincerely believing you are traveling north when you are actually traveling south. You can believe it with all your heart. You can be completely convinced that you're headed in the right direction. But your sincerity won't change where the road leads. You can be sincere and still be headed the wrong way.

The same is true spiritually. Paul isn't questioning Israel's passion. He's questioning what their confidence is resting upon.

And that makes Romans 10:2 more than a warning about someone else's faith. It asks us to examine our own.

We can sincerely trust the wrong things too. We may believe that being a good person, attending church, serving others, giving generously, or simply trying our best will make us right with God.

Those are good things. But good things make terrible saviors.

The question isn't simply, "Am I sincere?" The question is, "Is what I believe true?"

God has not asked us to place our confidence in how sincere, religious, or good we can become. He has given us Jesus.

Our feelings can mislead us. Our assumptions can be wrong. But God's Word directs us back to the truth. Sincerity is important, but sincerity is not a substitute for truth. Our faith must ultimately rest upon Jesus Christ.

Questions for Reflection

- What have I assumed makes me right with God?
- Is my faith resting on Christ or on my own sincerity?

- Is there something God's Word is challenging me to reconsider?

Prayer: Lord, keep me from trusting what merely seems right to me. Ground my faith in Your truth, correct me when I am wrong, and teach me to place my trust completely in Jesus. Amen.

Day 3 - Stop Building Your Own

Scripture: Romans 10:3 - *"For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."*

Reflection

Paul describes people trying to "establish their own" righteousness.

Think about that phrase for a moment. They were trying to build something for themselves that only God could give them.

That sounds exhausting. Yet we can easily do the same thing.

We begin keeping score. We measure ourselves by how well we behaved, how much we served, how often we prayed, how faithfully we attended church, or how much Scripture we know.

Sometimes we measure ourselves against other people. As long as we can find someone whose life looks worse than ours, we can reassure ourselves that we must be doing all right.

Without realizing it, we begin constructing a case for ourselves: Surely I've done enough. Surely I'm a good enough person. Surely God must be pleased with me.

But there is a problem. No amount of religious activity can make a sinful person righteous before a holy God. The gospel tells us something wonderfully freeing: You can stop building.

You don't have to establish a righteousness of your own because God offers you something far better - His righteousness through Christ.

Receiving that gift requires something that can be surprisingly difficult: Surrender.

We like to contribute something. We want to believe that our goodness, service, or religious devotion earns us at least a little credit with God.

But grace leaves no room for boasting.

We come to Christ with empty hands, admitting that we cannot make ourselves righteous and trusting what He has done for us.

That doesn't mean good works no longer matter. They simply move to the proper place. We don't obey in order to earn God's grace; we obey because we have received it.

Life with Christ does not begin with proving ourselves. It begins with surrender. Stop building. Open your hands. Receive what God gives through Christ.

Questions for Reflection

- Where am I tempted to measure my relationship with God by my performance?
- What am I still trying to prove to God?

- What would surrender look like for me today?

Prayer: Father, forgive me for trying to establish my own righteousness. Help me surrender my pride and stop trying to prove myself. Teach me to receive with open hands what You freely give through Christ. Amen.

Day 4 - The Ladder Against the Wrong Wall

Scripture: Philippians 3:8-9 - "...that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own..."

Reflection

Imagine spending your entire life climbing a ladder. You work hard. You keep climbing. You make progress one rung at a time. Sometimes the climb is difficult, but you refuse to quit.

Eventually, after years of effort, you finally reach the top.

Then you discover something terrible: The ladder has been leaning against the wrong wall. All that effort. All that climbing. All that progress. But you were headed toward the wrong destination. Effort was never the problem. The destination was.

Paul understood that kind of spiritual climbing. Earlier in Philippians 3, he lists all the things that once gave him confidence. He had the right heritage. He knew the Law. He was zealous for God. He had built an impressive religious resume.

If anyone could have pointed to his accomplishments and said, "Look at what I have done," it was Paul. But then Paul met Jesus.

Suddenly, the things he had been depending upon looked very different. Paul says he counted everything as loss compared with the surpassing value of knowing Christ. Paul hadn't discovered that religious devotion was bad. He discovered that religious achievement could never become his righteousness.

He had been climbing the wrong ladder. And that raises an important question for us: What ladder are you climbing?

Our ladders may look different from Paul's. Maybe yours is being a good person, attending church, serving others, knowing the Bible, or comparing yourself with others. These are good things, but they become a problem when we trust them to make us right with God.

Paul discovered something better. He wanted to be found in Christ, "not having a righteousness of my own."

That's the gospel. God isn't waiting at the top of a ladder to see whether you can climb high enough. In Christ, God has done for you what you could never do for yourself.

Prayer, Scripture, worship, service, and obedience still matter. But we don't do these things to earn God's grace. We do them because we have received His grace.

So ask yourself: Where is my hope resting?

The answer isn't to climb harder. Stop climbing. Rest in Christ. Trust Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

- What "ladder" have I been climbing to prove myself?
- Do I secretly believe God loves me more when I perform well?
- What would it look like to rest in Christ today?

Prayer: Jesus, forgive me for trying to earn what You freely give. Help me stop trusting my performance and rest completely in Your grace. Amen.

Day 5 - Christ Is Enough

Scripture: Romans 10:4 - *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."*

Reflection

Everything changes with two words: For Christ.

Throughout this week, we have returned again and again to one question: What are you trusting? Paul brings us to the answer in Romans 10:4. Our hope is not found in trying harder, doing better, or becoming good enough. Our hope is found in Christ.

The Law revealed the holiness of God. It showed what a life lived in perfect obedience to God looks like. But it also revealed something about us: we fall short. No matter how sincere we may be, none of us can stand before God and point to our own record as the reason we deserve His acceptance.

But the Law was never the end of the story. It pointed beyond itself to Christ. The promises of Scripture pointed to Him. The sacrifices anticipated Him. The prophets spoke of Him. And when Jesus came, He accomplished what we could never accomplish for ourselves. He lived in perfect obedience to the Father. He bore our sin upon the cross. He died the death our sin deserved, and on the third day, He rose victorious from the grave.

That means our righteousness before God does not depend upon our ability to make ourselves righteous.

Christ is enough.

Sometimes we know that Christ is enough in our minds while still struggling to live as though it is true.

When we have a good week - when we pray, read Scripture, attend church, or serve others - we may feel close to God. When we fail, we may wonder whether God could possibly still want us. But if our confidence rises and falls with our performance, we are still looking at ourselves instead of Christ. The gospel directs our eyes somewhere else: Look to Jesus.

Our assurance does not rest on how faithfully we have performed. It rests on what Christ has done. We don't obey God to earn His love. We obey because, through Christ, we have already received His grace.

So return one final time to the question that began this week: What are you trusting? Your goodness? Your church attendance? Your service? Your reputation? Or Jesus? None of those other things can carry the weight of your salvation. Only Jesus can. You don't have to prove yourself worthy of God's grace. Receive it with empty hands, trusting the One who gave Himself for you. Stop climbing. Surrender your self-trust. Rest in Christ. Christ is enough.

Questions for Reflection

- If someone asked why I have hope of eternal life, what would I say?

- What am I tempted to trust alongside Christ?
- Can I honestly say that my hope rests in Christ alone?

Prayer: Jesus, You are my righteousness and my hope. Forgive me for trusting in what I can do. Thank You for doing what I could never do for myself. Help me surrender my self-trust and rest completely in You. You are enough. Amen.