

Lost and Found (Ver. 2)
Romans 10:1-4
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- I. Introduction: Please turn to Romans chapter 10 as the 1st 4 verses of this chapter will be my primary text for this morning's message – a message I've titled, "Lost and Found" – which admittedly happens to be the same title of a similar message I preached quite a few years ago from this very passage. So, while this is a revision of that message, I stuck with the same title because I believe in these four verses, we have clear, identifying characteristics of 2 mutually exclusive states, both ... (1) those who are spiritually lost and (2) those who are spiritually saved – saved or found (like the 1 lost sheep out of 100 found by the shepherd in the Parable recorded in the 1st 7 verses of Luke 15).

Lost and Found – To be lost is to not know the way to your desired destination. Spiritually speaking, to be lost is to not know the way to heaven – God's way of salvation as set forth in His Word. The Bible teaches that we all start out this life's journey spiritually lost / spiritually blind, so that our 1st religious notions will have us all assume a way of salvation that is false, consistent with the natural, spiritually dead state in which we all begin. And apart from God's gracious intervention, we won't recognize our lost condition that would have us exercise the God-given faith and repentance that identifies all who are saved – like that 1 lost sheep Christ described in the parable, who upon being found was likened to the **"...joy <that> shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, <i.e. – justified in their own eyes> which need no repentance."**

Based on the identifying characteristics of these 2 polar opposite states (saved and lost) as set forth in our text, I'd like challenge each of us to ask ourselves this morning, "Am I (are you) among those described here as religious (but lost), or is the description that is given here of all true believers, true of you?" It's one or the other for each one of us.

Context: And before we examine the clear assertions of our Romans 10 text, let me first bring you up to speed on the immediate context. Paul is writing this to believers in Rome and in the latter part of the preceding chapter 9, he quotes Isaiah, saying in verse 27 that, **"...Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved."** He is telling his fellow Jewish believers that although there are many of us Jews, only a small number of us have been (and will be) blessed with true, God-given faith and repentance unto salvation.

He goes on then in verse 30 to contrast the believing Gentiles (who did not have the advantage of the Old Covenant Law of Moses) so they did not pursue righteousness (NKJV) by their law-keeping, but whom he describes as having attained (or come to) the law of righteousness – contrasting them with the majority of the Jews who “followed after (or did pursue) the law of righteousness” – this referring to their attempts to keep the law in order to find favor with God, but of whom he says they did not attain (or come to) the law of righteousness. In other words – they fell short.

And then in Rom.9:32, he addresses why (or how) this is so, saying, “**Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; ³³As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him** (that stumblingstone was a “him” – a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ) **shall not be ashamed.**” In other words, trusting in Him will stand up at the judgement.

II. Text: Romans 10:1-4:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ²For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Let's dig into this a bit.

III. They are Lost! We see from verse 1 that in sharing with his Jewish brethren in the faith how most of their fellow Jews were spiritually lost, Paul is not taking delight in that being the case. And we know that because he begins by expressing his compassion for their eternal well-being, his heart's desire and prayer that they might be saved. Likewise, I believe that any who preach the true Gospel of God's grace with clarity so as to distinguish the true Gospel from its many counterfeits – the Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed (Rom. 1:17). And in their pointing out how the majority of so-called “Christendom” today fall in that same category, and I believe based on the exact same evidence set forth here – that reality of their lost state is also sad to true Gospel preachers of our day.

So, I'm hoping you see that the relevance of our text goes way beyond just the application of it to these Jews. And faithful Gospel preachers only point these things out because (like Paul with respect to his fellow Jews) it is folks we care about, friends and relatives, and we know that if they are to be saved, that they (like all who are saved) must at some point see how tragically mistaken they've been through the revelation of God-given faith and repentance that would bring them to Christ to plead His righteousness alone for all their salvation.

God's command to repent is universal (quote Acts 17:30) – calling all sinners to turn from their initial, natural religious notions. And I believe this is Paul's motivation as it pertains to the majority of his fellow Jews. Now, in that he desires and prays for their salvation, we can know 1st that he is speaking of those who need salvation – who are lost! So, 1) they are lost, but not only are they lost, but ...

- IV. They are religious: Secondly, we know from verse 2, that 2) they are religious. Now we know that is not true of all lost folks. While I do believe the descriptions of verse 3 can be attributed to all who are lost, it's obvious that not all who are lost are religiously zealous. Many show no interest whatsoever in religion. But one reason I think this is such an excellent passage for all of us to use to examine whether we be in the faith is because, like these lost, but religious Jews, I assume everyone who hears this message, likewise has some religious interest or zeal, else you wouldn't be listening. Paul put it this way, "They have a zeal of God." Paul could identify with that. He was so zealous before his conversion, that in the name of his former religion, he was busy persecuting true Christians and thinking that counted for something before God. In Phil. 3 he wrote, "**...concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**" (Phil. 3:6) His zeal is one of the things he cited as being that of which he once was proud and thought found him in favor with God, but of which he had since repented – even counted them dung that he may win Christ and be found.... <quote>. Many of these devout Jews prayed and fasted and tithed their money, some even over and above that which the law called for – their zeal was not in question.
- V. They lacked knowledge: Now their problem didn't lie in the fact that they were zealous and religious, but that their religious zeal was "not according to knowledge." They lacked some vital knowledge – so vital that it is what identifies them as in need of salvation – of being lost, misguided religionists. And Paul doesn't just say, "They're missing a little something, but they're okay – they just need a bit more teaching." No, he prayed for their salvation, and he tells them exactly what they were missing – what knowledge they lacked as we read in verse 3 – they were ignorant of the righteousness of God.
- VI. The Righteousness of God: What is the righteousness of God of which Paul says they were ignorant? We can know from Romans 3 and from verse 4 of our text (which I believe is about as concise of a biblical definition of righteousness one can get) that he is referring to the justice-satisfying merit of Christ's obedience unto death on the cross – that righteousness which He came to establish (and did establish) as a Substitute for all He saves, in perfectly satisfying the law and justice of God for them. As verse 4 reads, Christ is the end (i.e. – the completion, the fulfillment, the finishing) of the law for righteousness! And that is the righteousness of which most of these Jews were ignorant.

Paul also describes the righteousness of God back in Romans chapter 3. Look there with me beginning in verse 21: ***“But now the righteousness of God without the law <i.e. – without your meeting the conditions and requirements set forth in the law> is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by faith <or the faithfulness> of Jesus Christ unto all <I believe that is preached to all> and upon all them that believe: <that is put upon or imputed, put to their account> for there is no difference: ²³For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation <i.e. – a sin-bearing, justice-satisfying sacrifice> through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission <the payment / forgiveness> of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: <the satisfaction to God’s law and justice that Christ made by His obedience unto death, as it reads...> that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*** God can’t merely look over our sins. They must be dealt with and that in keeping with God’s strict justice. Christ had to be that vicarious, propitiatory sacrifice so as to pay the sin debt in full for all He saves and here we see that this is His righteousness so that God might be true to His character – be just and still save / justify them. That’s His redemptive glory!

I believe that is what Paul is more concisely restating in Romans 10:4, that ***“...Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”*** In years past, I well may have suggested this meant that Christ will be the end of the law for righteousness for you also, IF you believe. But no – rather he is stating that if you are a believer of God’s Gospel – the Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed – then Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to you. It’s important to not confuse cause and effect here. As we read in Romans 8:10, ***“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”*** We’re only given spiritual life that we might believe on Christ because of righteousness having been accounted (imputed) unto us.

- VII. Verse 3 Un-divided: Now let’s consider further the descriptions of lost sinners found in verse 3. And this verse needs to be considered as a whole and not divided up so as to imagine that some religious folks might be ignorant of God’s righteousness but not necessarily going about to establish one of their own. No, the religious but lost here are identified as...
 (1) ***“being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and (2 – and I believe by default, if they are religious, they are) going about to establish their own righteousness, (and so thereby it is concluded 3rdly, that they...) have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*** You can’t have submitted yourself unto something of which you’re ignorant. This is the unambiguous explanation of why Paul knows them to be lost. This is the record he bears of them.

Most everyone who calls themselves “Christian,” will agree that only those who believe the “gospel” shall be saved, perhaps knowing of the great commission Christ gave to the disciples in Mark 16:15-16, **“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He that believeth (the gospel) and is baptized <that’s the profession of it> shall be saved; but he that believeth not (believeth not the gospel) shall be damned.”**

So most profess belief in what they call the “gospel.” The problem lies in that the “gospel” so many believe is what the Bible calls another gospel – not God’s Gospel. As I’ve already alluded to, Romans 1:16-17 (*quote*) declares that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation – it is what is believed by those who are saved. But we can’t ignore vs. 17 which makes it clear that this is so (that it is the power of God unto salvation) for (or because) therein is the righteousness of God revealed. So, it is impossible to believe God’s Gospel, while ignorant of God’s righteousness, because righteousness is what is revealed to those who believe God’s Gospel through which God powerfully saves them.

VIII. Ignorance of the Righteousness of God: What constitutes ignorance of this righteousness?

- A. Oblivious to it – Some are like myself in years past, oblivious to the righteousness of God in Christ as the merit of His finished work that is revealed in the true Gospel. *<an attribute>*
- B. Their need for righteousness – Secondly, like many, I also had no idea of my need for a perfect righteousness. I thought Christ somehow made up the difference for my shortcomings if I’d just strike my end of the bargain by doing my part. That certainly fell short of thinking I needed a perfect righteousness and to not know of your need for Christ’s righteousness, is to be ignorant of the righteousness of God.
- C. Ignorant of the standard of judgment – Thirdly, to be ignorant of Christ’s righteousness as the standard by which God shall judge us is to be ignorant of the righteousness of God. As we read in Acts 17:31, **“... he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”**
How righteous must we be? —as righteous as the Lord of glory. I can’t produce that. I can’t obey the precepts of God’s revealed will perfectly and I have nothing (not even my own death) that is sufficient to pay the debt due to the strict and holy justice of God due unto my sin. His righteousness (that of the sinless, spotless Son of God – who was perfectly sinless and who offered the payment of His infinitely valuable blood) – that righteousness must be somehow made mine, which brings me to the next aspect of how many are ignorant...

D. Imputed righteousness – During all the years I spent zealously practicing my false religion, I had never even heard the term “imputed righteousness.” I never heard any emphasis on passages like Romans 4 where in verse 6 David is quoted as having described, “***..the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,***” Now if you could be convinced you need righteousness for acceptance before a holy God (which you do), but know nothing of the doctrine of imputation you would be left in despair and without hope. You would be one who knows you need something you have no hope of producing. Thankfully God the Holy Spirit doesn’t leave us there. He doesn’t truly convince us of sin without also convincing us of His justifying righteousness and how this is accounted unto all of God’s elect children – those whom He saves.

Consider: If you’re truly convinced of your need for His righteousness, then it’s because you’ve also been convinced of your sinfulness (John 16) – so much so that if some preacher comes along and tries to answer your dilemma by directing you to look within yourself to find righteousness (as some are doing these days), suggesting that God makes you inherently righteous within, gives you a righteous nature that cannot sin – well that just won’t work for you, not if God has done the convincing. You would have discovered that there is nothing that proceeds from yourself that isn’t tainted with sin. (E.g. – my prayers).

To need the righteousness of God is to need a perfect, untainted, righteousness that answers fully the demands of God’s holy law and justice. You must have Christ’s very righteousness put to your account, imputed to you, for nothing else will fit your need. Only by having righteousness imputed, can we who are sinners (in and of ourselves) be accepted as righteous before a holy God.

Just as the sins of God’s elect were charged or imputed to Christ that He might bear the demerit (the guilt) due unto them and pay a penalty of such value that it would pay the debt due to the offense of all the sins of all God’s elect – past, present, and future. And that He did in His death, in the shedding of His precious blood; likewise, God has imputed or charged to the account of everyone for whom He lived and died (for whom He bore their demerit), the merit of His accomplished work in satisfaction to justice – His righteousness. That is the essence of that great exchange set forth in 2 Cor. 5:21 <quote>.

That is the only righteousness that fits my need and it doesn’t reside within me. It resides right now at the right hand of the Father in the Person of my Savior, my Surety, my Substitute, my Mediator, Jesus Christ, who is ever interceding on my behalf on that very basis – on the basis of that which He did for me – not based on the work of the Holy Spirit in me.

The miraculous work of the Spirit in me is what has me (and keeps me) looking exclusively to what He did for me – for my salvation – keeps me looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (Heb. 12:2).

- IX. Going about to establish their own righteousness: Now Paul adds that in their ignorance, they are “going about to establish their own righteousness.” That word translated “establish” means to “make stand” in the sight of God – in other words they presume to be able to do something that will stand up before God as their justifying righteousness – something that will differentiate you as being saved rather than lost, whether we called it righteousness or not. It is to imagine that salvation is at least in some way, and / or to some degree conditioned on the sinner (works) rather than seeing how all the conditions for salvation were fully met (and only met) by the doing and dying of the Savior (that’s grace). See, nothing we can do (nor anything that we might credit God the H/S with doing in or through us) meets that standard by which we’re judged – the perfect righteousness of God in Christ.

If you’re religious, but you’re not looking to Christ and His righteousness imputed as your only ground of salvation, then by necessity (whether you recognize it or not) you are going about to establish your own righteousness because if your plea (or basis for counting yourself saved) is anything other than (or in addition to) Christ and His imputed righteousness, then the only thing left to plea or bank upon would be something done by, in, or through you the sinner. That is to esteem that which proceeds from you in opposition to / in rivalry with the finished work of Jesus Christ – the only righteousness God the Father will accept.

Sinners who are saved are accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:6) – due to their union with Jesus Christ before the justice bar of God. And to think otherwise is not just simply to be sadly mistaken, as all of us initially are by nature. It’s to be sinfully, rebelliously, sadly mistaken. It’s evil and opposed to the very glory of God in the Person and finished work of Christ.

God put it this way in Galatians 2:21b that “**...if righteousness come by the law**, (i.e. – akin to your meeting a condition or requirement in order to be saved) **then Christ is dead in vain.**” There’s the evil – to imagine salvation is conditioned on the sinner is to esteem the death of Jesus Christ as a vain thing, whether you recognize that to be so or not.

- X. Not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God: So, Paul concludes verse 3 saying that they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Submission. From Matthew 5:3, those who are eternally blessed with salvation are described this way: “**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.**” Meekness there denotes submission. And notice that when one has been humbled so as to submit in meekness to the righteousness of God, they don’t earn anything thereby– they inherit. I want an inheritance – that which my spotless Savior earned for me.

You see, to be submitted involves a humbling that is reflected in repentance from our dead works that always accompanies genuine, God-given faith. Now are these descriptions relevant to us today? Who fits this description (like these non-believing Jews) of not being submitted to the righteousness of God?

- A. Non-believing Jews – Obviously it includes these non-believing Jews of whom Paul specifically directs his remarks. To them, Christ was a stumbling stone, a rock of offense as we read and yet consider that they looked forward to a Messiah – just not this One who would execute righteousness in the earth by which men are justified before God. But is this only descriptive of these unbelieving Jews?
- B. Arminians – Well, is that any different from most who profess to be of the “christian” faith today? Whereas the Jews professed belief in a Messiah, many so-called “Christians” profess belief in the historical Christ as being the promised Messiah – but it’s not the Christ of the Bible (as He is identified by His Person and His work). It's not the Christ who brought in this everlasting righteousness by which any and all for whom it was established are justified and shall in time be saved – translated from spiritual darkness into His marvelous light.

The majority of religious folks in our part of the world believe as I once did – that Christ died for everyone who ever lived, including the multitudes the scriptures declare shall perish. And in so believing, we esteemed His death on the cross to have accomplished no more for those who are saved than it failed to do for those who perish. Many, if challenged about this will respond as I would have, “Oh, but you have got to believe to make what He did effectual.”

And I know when I would reply that way, I did so without any sense of the evil, prideful, God-dishonoring reality that I thought my faith was the real difference maker, not the doing and dying of Christ – that my faith could accomplish what took the doing and dying (the precious blood) of the Lord of glory. That is faith in faith, not faith in Christ. I called Christ my Savior, but the reality is, that whatever is presumed to be the ultimate difference-maker in your salvation – that’s your savior. I said it was Jesus, but my former doctrine exposed my savior was my act of believing – believing what I had been erroneously taught – a false gospel. And that is to be just as ignorant of, and just as not submitted to the one justifying righteousness of God (that which Christ alone could and did render) as these unbelieving Jews were in Paul’s day, and thereby – going about to establish a righteousness of their own.

- C. Compromising Calvinists – Well, lastly there are those whose doctrine would seem more consistent with the true Gospel than my former doctrine.

I consider myself fortunate in that I first heard the Gospel wherein His righteousness was revealed at the same time I began to first learn and see in the scriptures what many call the doctrines of grace – what some refer to as Calvinistic or reformed doctrine. Back when God first drew me to Himself under the true Gospel, there was a group called the Founders Group that was just beginning to emerge from within the Southern Baptist Convention and they claimed to believe some of these “Calvinistic” doctrines. But, being young in the faith, it amazed me to discover there were folks such as these who were not as mistaken as I had been about the sovereignty of God in salvation – about the doctrines of election and particular redemption. So, I initially was baffled that these doctrines apparently had not turned their world upside down like it did mine. And this was evident by their embracing others as spiritual brethren whose “gospel” doctrine was the same as that of which I had repented.

See, having heard these doctrines within the context of God’s Gospel wherein His righteousness was set forth and revealed, I experienced a complete change of heart and mind about who God was and how He saves sinners. The gospel I believed identified my God. So, when by God’s grace, I changed gospels, I also changed gods and repented of the idol that was exposed by my previous erroneous notions of how He saved sinners – a way that denied practically every attribute of the true and living God of the Bible. And nothing but the imputed righteousness of Christ would do for me from then on. What I discovered is that many learn much doctrine without hearing with the spiritual ear of faith the true Gospel wherein His righteousness is set forth and revealed.

My point is this – Paul didn’t say, “Well today brethren I want to teach you some deeper theology. I’d like to talk with you about why Christ came and what He accomplished in establishing righteousness, but don’t worry, even in your ignorance of these things you’re okay because I know you say you trust Christ so, you’re still a believer.” No – Paul couldn’t do that. He cared for these people, and he could only have told them that lie if he actually believed that to be true. You don’t knowingly lie to your dearest friends and family about things pertaining to eternal life and death. No, if your neighbor’s house is on fire, you don’t call them up and say, “Hey, there’s no need to panic but you might want to check on things when you get a chance to make sure you’re not in danger.” No, you’d scream, “Get out of there, you’re in danger, your house is on fire!”

And for any who will speak peace to those who still give credence to the false gospel so popular in our day among most who consider themselves of the “Christian” faith, we would do well to consider 2 John verses 9-11 which reads...

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, <the doctrine of Christ is the true Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed> hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, <and I believe this is speaking of a house of worship for in that day they often would meet to worship in houses. He is not saying to break all fellowship with our lost friends and relatives, but he is saying don’t have religious fellowship with them> **neither bid him God speed**: <Don’t condone his or her religion or “speak peace” as if they’re okay “where there is no peace” – where they are ignorant of (or not submitted to) the only ground of peace between God and man – the imputed righteousness of Christ. Verse 11...> ¹¹**For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”**

See, there are people who know a lot of true doctrine, including believing God to be sovereign, even sovereign in salvation as He is. And yet if they consider themselves or others to have been saved at a time in which they were ignorant of Christ’s righteousness, then they expose that they too have not submitted to His justifying righteousness as the only ground of salvation. That humbling submission has not taken place.

XI. True believers: Back to our text in verse 4 Paul then describes what is true of everyone (not just some, but all) that believeth: ***For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*** Christ is the end (the completion, the fulfillment, the finishing) of the law for righteousness! That word translated “end” is derived from the same root word used by Christ in some of His last words on the cross, “It is finished.” And He finished it. He’s the end, the finishing of the law for righteousness – and that to every true believer!

XII. Closing: How about someone you who hears this message? Is Christ the end of the law for righteousness to you? Well, if He truly is, good news – as God’s word says in verse 4 of our text, this is true of everyone that believes – what assurance! It’s that simple.

For most of my life I sang that popular hymn, Amazing Grace. But only when one has received that blood-bought gift of faith and repentance in belief of God’s Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed, can they honestly sing this phrase from Amazing Grace, “I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see!”

Lost and Found!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God’s grace found in the only infallible source, God’s word itself – the Bible.