

**Text: Romans 10:1 (Pew Bible pg.1120)**

**Title: “Compelling Witnesses”**

Open your Bibles with me to Romans 10:1 (Pew Bible pg.1120). As you’re turning, let me encourage you dads to plan to bring your daughters to the Father/Daughter Banquet on Feb.10. This is for dads and daughters (kindergarten through adults). Dr. Eric Thomas, pastor of FBC, Norfolk VA will be our speaker. He has four daughters, so he is imminently qualified to speak to the subject. Consider it an early valentines date with your daughter. Now let’s look at Romans 10:1.

We’ve been talking about the fact that our main assignment as followers of Christ is to be His witnesses. After Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection He promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to come to indwell them. And the purpose for which He would invade our lives with His Spirit is to give us power for being His witnesses.

**John 20:21 - Again Jesus said, “...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”**

What compels people to come to Christ? Is it our ability to persuade? Is it the force of our personality or of our concern for them? Is it our effective presentation of the facts of the Gospel? God may, and often does, use those things. But what compels people to come to Christ is the Holy Spirit’s work in their hearts.

Note: That may be where some of you are today. You can’t explain it, but you have been overwhelmed with your sin and your need to be saved. I’ve had people tell me when I’ve witnessed to them that they don’t think it’s the right time for them to receive Christ. The Bible says...

**Hebrews 3:15 - “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...”**

And in this great work that the Holy Spirit does in the human heart, God, in His grace, includes us. He works through us. We’ve talked about being *courageous* witnesses (because we will face opposition), *compassionate* witnesses (because the lost are perishing), *capable* witnesses (because there is a skill to be learned) and, today, *compelling* witnesses (because there’s power that doesn’t come from us, but it comes through us, that draws others to Christ). We see this in our text today.

**Romans 10:1 (NIV) - Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.**

Now will you notice the target of Paul’s concern? His concern is for “the Israelites.” Now what do we know about God’s plan for Israel? We know that they are God’s covenant people. God formed the nation of Israel for His very own possession and purposes. He made a unique covenant with them that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through them. Out of Israel came the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But Israel, by and large, rejected the Messiah. In fact, they were instrumental in the crucifixion of Jesus. So is God finished with Israel? No! At another time you can read Romans 9-11 and you will see that God isn’t done with Israel. They are His covenant people, and there will be a day when many Israelites come to Christ.

Now I say all that to tell you that though God's eternal purpose and was and is for the Jews to one day embrace the Messiah, God still wants to use believers to bring that to pass. And the same thing is true about the rest of the world who are not Jews. God is drawing them to Himself as well and He wants to include us in His work to draw people to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

God had something amazing in mind when He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the Cross. His vision was and is that people would hear the message that Christ died for their sins and put their trust in Christ and be saved to become followers of Christ. But then God did something very risky. He gave believers the responsibility to take the Good News to the lost.

And when the vision of what God was doing in Christ grips our hearts it will be exhibited in two ways:

## 1. OUR PASSION FOR THE LOST

**Romans 10:1 (NIV) - Brothers, my heart's desire ... for the Israelites is that they may be saved.**

In other words, Paul said, I want what God wants for them ... that they would be saved. Our mission statement says, "We join God in developing passionate followers of Jesus Christ." As followers of Jesus we are passionate for Christ, and we have a passion to see others become passionate about Christ.

Now this is more than just a mental wish. It is the passion of one's heart. And the heart he's talking about here is not the physical pump that beats in our chest cavity. He's speaking about the whole of our inner being, which includes the mind, the will and the emotions, all bundled together.

Now we see this passion for the lost, this heart's desire for the lost, described in Romans 9.

**Romans 9:1-2 - I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.**

What a broken heart for the lost!

**Romans 9:3-4a - For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel...**

In other words, Paul is saying, "I would go so far as to be condemned and cut off from Christ, if by doing that my countrymen, my people, could be saved." Now we know that what Jesus did on the Cross is that He took on Himself the curse of God and was cut off from God for the time He was on the Cross. So it isn't necessary or even possible for someone other than Christ to do that. But Paul is saying, "If that's what it takes, I'd do it. I'm that passionate, I'm that burdened for my people to come to Christ."

It's us saying to our loved ones and friends, "I can't imagine going to heaven without you."

**ILLUSTRATION** - Let me show you what this looks like. A couple of weeks ago a lady in our church shared with one of our pastors about her passion for the lost. Her son had died tragically a few months ago, and she was still dealing with the grief of that:

Thank you so much for praying with me a few Sundays ago. I told you that day that I wanted to touch other people's lives with God's love, but that I didn't know how. Because I have been dealing with my grief, I didn't know how God could use me right now, but I love Jesus and I wanted to serve him even in my grief. Well he has been so gracious and has allowed me to experience the joy of leading another lady to him.

I had already told you that a co-worker that (my son) and I had been praying for surrendered her life to Christ a week after I returned to work. She and I have lunch together and naturally I had been talking to her about my personal relationship with Jesus so she surrendered her life to Christ. After she did that we started studying the Bible together during lunch. She told her sister about it and her sister said she wanted to study with us. We met at my house for Bible study the Sunday after you and I prayed together. That day (my friend's sister) surrendered her life to Christ. On Tuesday (a week later) I invited another co-worker to our Bible study and she came. We met this evening at my house. The three ladies are very excited about studying the Bible and I am so thankful that God is so gracious to bless me in this way. I wanted to let you know what God is doing and ask you to continue to pray for us.”

That's what a passion for the lost looks like. And when we have the vision of God for the lost we possess a passion for the lost. But it will also be seen in...

## **2. OUR PRAYER FOR THE LOST**

**Romans 10:1 (NIV) - Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.**

Now it's not enough just to be passionate about it. If it is all passion and no prayer, we will do everything in our own strength. And if it is prayer without passion, our prayers will not be effective because our hearts are not fervent.

The salvation of the soul is the work of God from start to finish. It is a supernatural work that only God can do. But God wants to include believers in this great work through our sharing and our praying.

The reason for human intercession in the divine plan of salvation has not been wholly revealed. But it is clear that prayer is an essential link in the pipeline that carries the living water to a dying soul. God in His grace has chosen to include us as partners with Him in bringing souls into His Kingdom. Though we cannot do the important supernatural work of saving the lost, God has permitted us, through intercession, to be a partner with Him in the great plan of salvation.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Dawson Trotman was a man whose writings God used in a mighty way in the formative years of my Christian life. About prayer he said, “In helping others if you start with prayer you start with God, and when you start with God you start right.”

**John 15:7 - If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.**

**John 15:8 - This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

Jesus connects everything here. Our relationship with Christ in our Bible study and prayer will result in fruit being borne from our lives. The fruit Jesus is speaking of here includes the fruit of people coming to faith in Christ through our witness.

Jesus often compared this matter of sharing Christ with others and others coming to Christ to the sowing of seed and the harvest that comes from that.

**John 4:35 - Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.**

**Luke 10:2 - He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.**

Now this is important. There are a lot of times we don't know what to pray for. Well, here Jesus tells us exactly what to pray. And I've discovered that I can't pray this without feeling God thrusting me into his harvest field.

Let me give you some guidance as to how the Bible shows us to pray for non-believers. Let me suggest that you use your note sheet and keep it handy in your quiet time when you pray for others. I've included the Scripture passages in your notes as well. As you pray for non-believers...

- Ask God to draw them to Himself.

**John 6:44 - "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.**

This is the great work of God in salvation. He draws lost people to Himself and we pray for God's will to be done in this.

- Ask God to open a door for you and/or others to speak with them.

The Apostle Paul, as great a witness as he was, asked for others to pray for him in this way:

**Colossians 4:3 (NIV) - And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.**

- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what to say and how to say it.

**Mark 13:11 (NIV) - Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.**

I tell you, this is one of the most amazing things I see God do in my life. When I'm sharing Christ with someone I often don't know what to say. But in the course of the conversation I hear myself saying things that I know didn't come from me. The Holy Spirit has shown me.

- Ask God to open their eyes to see the truth of the Gospel.

You need to know this about our lost condition apart from Christ:

**2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV) - The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

But when a person is saved this is what happens:

**2 Corinthians 4:6 (NIV) - For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to their heart.

**John 16:8 (NIV) - When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:**

**ILLUSTRATION** – I was speaking with a young man yesterday about his relationship with Christ. He talked about how he was just overwhelmed with a sense of guilt about the mess he had made of his life. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

- Ask God to help them to repent and believe the Good News.

**Mark 1:15 (NIV) - "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"**

The Bible teaches that this is what a person must do to be saved.

To repent means to change your mind about the direction of your life. And the Bible teaches that we can't change our minds about the direction of our lives without the help of God, granting us repentance.

To believe mean is more than just intellectual assent. It means to put the full weight of your life on Christ. And the Bible teaches that we can't even do that without God's help.

So we ask God to help people repent and believe.

- Ask Christ to give them eternal life to them.

**John 3:16 (NIV) - “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

**Romans 10:1 (NIV) - Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.**

“My prayer is that they may be saved....”

So God includes us in this great work through our passion for the lost and our prayer for the lost.

**ILLUSTRATION** - One of my predecessors here as pastor at TABC was a tremendous pastor and evangelist by the name of C.E. “Charlie” Matthews. He was pastor here in the 20s, 30s and 40s. He went on to become the evangelism director for what is now the North American Mission Board of the SBC. He wrote a book entitled *Every Christian’s Job*. In that book he talks about the importance of prayer in our efforts to share Christ with others. (See *Every Christian’s Job*, p.38).