

# How the lost are found

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to do that by looking at a couple of chapters in Romans 9 and 10.

And they're really chapters which are mainly about why Israel has not believed. Why if the gospel is such wonderful news that the Jews not believed.

And yet I think what we can find in these chapters are wonderful insights into how the lost are found. And so let us pray.

Father in heaven we do pray that we would be people who are eager to play our part in seeking the lost.

Father we're not all called to be evangelists. But we are called to bear witness. To play our role in your mission. As you build your kingdom.

[ 1 : 14 ] And that is an absolute privilege. You do not need us at all. Not in one little bit.

But in your kindness you have allowed us to be your instruments. Your mouthpiece. To be your body language so to speak. That we are the body of Christ.

Your hands. Your feet and your mouth. So we pray use us in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. I think I've announced both this morning and this evening that this Tuesday is the only morning prayer meeting.

And it's not. It's the following week. John Silver has told me. Which I'm sure you're all mightily relieved because you were all planning to be there. Yeah. So it's next week. Now I'm going to argue tonight that to be a good Bible reader.

To be a good Bible reader you need to be a juggler. A typical mistake that Christians make is that we tend to hold one truth against another. Rather than holding them both together.

[ 2 : 19 ] I don't know if you've heard this definition of a fundamentalist. What is a fundamentalist? A fundamentalist is someone who holds half a truth. As though it were the whole truth. They hold half a truth.

As though it were the whole truth. And I think we can't help ourselves but to pit one against the other. One truth against the other. And that is why I want to argue that a good Bible reader is a good juggler.

We hold those balls in the air. And if you hold on to one ball at the expense of another then you'll drop it. You've got to keep them up in the air.

And if you imagine each ball being a theological truth. The aim of the game is to keep them all in the air at the same time. Even though sometimes we can't work out the relationship between the truths.

So as I look at how the lots are found tonight. What I want to do is I want to juggle with a few balls. And there are five ways to answer that question. Now I know over three points nobody ever remembers.

[ 3 : 21 ] And so there is a summary of this sermon. Which is normally a bad sign. But I want you to try and remember this sermon this week. So as you go out on the left there will be a little red piece of paper. I didn't give you the piece of paper before.

Because then you would listen to the sermon otherwise. But I thought if I give you the summary. But at least you'll listen and hopefully you'll remember it. So my first point.

My first answer. To the question how the lots are found. Is when the people of God. Begin to anguish over the lost. How are the lost found when the people of God begin to anguish.

Over the lost. That's how Paul begins in Romans chapter 9. Let me read to you these verses. They are stunning verses tonight. Open your Bible 945 if you've got a black church Bible. I am speaking the truth in Christ.

I am not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. That I have great, great sorrow. And unceasing, never ending anguish in my heart.

[ 4 : 18 ] Paul's pain for his own people, the Jews, is so deep. His sorrow is so great. His anguish never ends. He's not faking it.

This is not a trick to manipulate people. To sort of side with him in some way. He says, doesn't he? Start of verse 1. I'm not lying. My conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit.

He is burdened over Israel. Israel. Who has rejected the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. And he knows what will await those people. Even though they've had great covenant privilege.

Even though they've had the promises of God. He knows if they reject and they do not repent. He knows what will happen. I know that we would feel for our loved ones.

In exactly the same way. Then you have, don't you? One of the most shocking verses in all of the Bible. The more I study this verse, the more I think that I can't believe Paul is saying it.

[ 5 : 22 ] Verse 3. For I could wish. For I could wish that I myself were accursed. And cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers. My kinsmen.

My people. My own. According to the flesh. So big is Paul's pain. For his. The people of Israel.

That he kind of postulates. He kind of has this thought. This desire. That if it was somehow possible. That he could take their place in hell. Or that he could give his place in heaven.

He would do so. Now if it was anyone else. Who was writing this. You would think. Well obviously they don't understand hell. They don't understand judgment. That awaits. But we know the apostle clearly does.

So think about this passage for a moment. I know that I would give my kidneys to my wife. No problems. But. I'd lay down. My life for my kids.

[ 6 : 25 ] I'm almost certain of that. You never know what you can do on the day. But. But I'm. But I'm hopeful. I'm optimistic. But to give my place in heaven for them.

Isn't it wonderful that God doesn't even allow us that option. Isn't it? That option is reserved only for the Lord Jesus Christ. Of all the choices you will have to make in life.

Offering your pleasure in heaven. Or your love. This is not one of them. Praise the Lord for that.

And notice all of this is an expression of Paul's love for his own people. There are two reasons that he gives.

Number one. They are his own flesh and blood. He is a Jew. He is one of the Jews that accepted Jesus as Messiah. And the other thing is the uniqueness of his people. They are the literal descendants of Abraham.

And so again we need to ask ourselves. This challenge isn't it? Do I have a love for my own unconverted flesh and blood? And I don't just mean your immediate family.

[ 7 : 34 ] Your extended family. Do you have a burden of people? A burden of people of your race? And your land. This land. This fine land.

This fine land that has produced. There's so many wonderful Christians in the past. But the flame doesn't burn as brightly as it once did. I often don't feel that.

The first statement of the series on how lost is the lost. I shared at the beginning that when I see a crowd. It's not my automatic thought. My default position is not a passion for the lost.

And one of the things that I found really helpful in thinking that through. Is in Matthew chapter 10.

Jesus looks at the lost sheep of Israel. And they are burdened and abused. And his heart is moved with compassion. It's the same word that captures the father's heart.

When he sees the prodigal returning. And then Jesus in response to that. Says to his disciples. He tells them. You pray to the Lord of the harvest to raise up workers. And I tell you why I find that comforting.

[ 8 : 40 ] Because the prayer of the disciples. Is not based on their compassion for the lost sheep of Israel. It's not based on that. It was based on the compassion of Jesus. And I find that quite liberating.

The lost often don't matter much to me. But they matter. To my Lord and my love. And if they matter to him.

That's enough for me. The lost are found when we begin to see the lost through the eyes of Jesus. Whose heart is filled with compassion. So how are the lost found when we develop a passion for the lost through the eyes of Jesus.

Point two. The lost are found when we grasp the truth. That God is the one who seeks the lost. The lost are found ultimately. Because before time began.

God decided. On whom he would have mercy upon. That famous verse from Romans 8 to 29. We preached on it. I preached on it earlier this year isn't it? Where it says.

[ 9 : 40 ] It says. For those he foreknew. He also predestined. To be conformed to the image of his son. In order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Because those he predestined. He also called. And those he called. He also justified. And those he justified. He also glorified. And it's important to remember.

That before we seek the lost. God has already done it. Before it's about us. It's about him. He. He. He.

Before time began. God said of those. And he's appointed to eternal life. You'll be coming home with me. On the last day. Appointed to life. What a relief.

I tell you. This truth. Keeps me sane. Probably more than any other. As a minister. It stops me. From wanting. To manipulate people.

[ 10 : 37 ] Because I know. That it's in the hands of God. I don't have to trick people. Into the kingdom. I think. A lady. Who came to church. She comes from Little Stars. I don't remember her name.

She came to Little Stars. And. It was just. A Sunday. Before I went on holiday. Last year. And I think. I preached on. The Apostle Paul. Self concept. You won't remember the sermon.

And you shouldn't remember the sermon. Because it was pretty incomprehensible. And this woman. Who the Little Stars leaders. Had prayed for. She came. It was so thrilling. And then I preached. An incomprehensible sermon.

That by the end. I didn't know. Now what is. What is our hope at that point? Well. I said to myself. As I got out of bed. And went on holiday. Thank goodness. We believe in predestination. Imagine. If. It's new. Because. Imagine. If. Salvation. Of our loved ones. Rested in our hands. Or in the hands of other Christians. I don't trust the church.

[ 11 : 34 ] There. There. There are too many. Meatheads. Aren't there. Including myself. How else. Can we live in a world. Where children are sexually. Interfered with. By church leaders.

And expect them. To believe in Jesus. Or a woman. Who is squashed. Under the name. Of Christian headship. In a marriage. Or a person. Who talks about Jesus.

To their friends. But then talks behind their back. About them. There are so many. Good reasons. Not to become a Christian. I think. How on earth. Did any of us. Become Christians.

And so the question here. Is not whether we choose God. Or God chooses us. The point here. Is simply. We chose God. Only because he first chose us. We love him. Because he first loved us. It's in his hands. Human will. And divine sovereignty. Are both revealed. And once you grasp that. You understand that your salvation. Is completely. Completely. Utterly.

[ 12 : 33 ] Totally. Thoroughly. Absolutely. Definitely. Based on God's. Gracious. Sovereign calling. No one has said it better.

I think. Than C.S. Lewis. That when he reflected. On his own conversion. This hard nosed atheist. Who finally bowed the knee. Said this. I never had the experience. Of looking for God.

It was the other way around. He was the hunter. Or so it seemed to me. And I was the deer. He stalked me. Like a red skin. Took an erring aim.

And fired. And I am thankful. That this is how. The first meeting occurred. And don't be proud. Don't be proud tonight. To think that.

In your case. It was any different at all. Because it wasn't. God. Has his elect. So let's go out and get them.

[ 13 : 28 ] Because those who have been appointed. To eternal life. Will believe. This ought to not. Result. In some despondent.

Resignation. I know that it often has. Isn't it? In certain quarters. It's resulted in that way. But actually. As we understand. Election.

And predestination. It should inspire. Confident action. On the part of Christians. Because what it means. Is that this whole doctrine.

Of predestination. Is that whoever I'm standing. Before. It could be. Osama. Or it could be. Obama. It could be.

A hardcore. Fundamentalist. Muslim. Or a. Third generation. Atheist. Or a God. Cursing. Banker. Or your children.

[14:26] It doesn't matter. Who you're standing next to. Because if God wants. He will get them. So preach. Teach. Teach. Speak.

He gets to choose. Not you. You. You are indiscriminate. We preach the gospel. We don't know the elect. Do we? But he will draw his people to himself.

And we've seen that. And we look around you at the church. Different kinds of people. Different kinds of personality. From different nations. Because those he predestined. He called.

Those he called. He justified. And those he justified. He glorified. Predestination. Does not prevent. This apostle. From feeling. For the lost. And interestingly.

He doesn't use. This doctrine. To discourage. Prayer. In fact. In chapter 10. Verse 1. Here's point 3. How are the lost found? The lost are found. When we pray for them. Chapter 10. And verse 1. Brothers.

[15:26] My heart's desire. And prayer. To God for them. Is that they may be saved. The lost are found. When we pray for them. The God who said.

I will have mercy. On whom I will have mercy. Is the God who welcomes prayer. On behalf of the lost. We are to bathe. Our mission in prayer.

Jesus said. Apart from me. You can do. What? Nothing. Nothing. And so pray. And if God is not sovereign. Prayer is totally pointless.

If we have a God. Who is sovereign. In every area. But the salvation. Of humans. Then God. Is not sovereign. It's the reason. I can pray.

Surely. The fact that I. Can't put. All the pieces. Together. Well so what? And have you not seen. The way that God. Answers prayer.

[16:24] Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. We need to be more patient. God hears the prayers of his people. And sometimes you have to be praying. A long time.

Bethan Evans. Is a girl that. I grew up with. In our youth group. At the age of 15. In complete shock to me. And the rest of the youth group. Bethan decided that. She would no longer.

Come to church. She didn't want anything. To do with the gospel. She wanted to move out. As soon as possible. From her parents home. It was absolutely shocking. And so she went. And. People grieved over it.

People were so sad. She didn't really want. Any contact with anyone. In the church. I remember dad. Dave and Anne Evans. Prayed. And kept praying. But there was a great sorrow. A constant sorrow.

Two years ago. Living. 200 miles. In the middle of mid Wales. Bethan Evans. Became pristine. I don't know how. I don't know. What led to it. But she wrote her. Father. A birthday card.

[17:23] A father's day card. That year. And it said in the card. To dad. Bring up a child. In the way that it should go. Dot dot dot. Lots of love. Bethan. Debbie Clowney.

Paul Clowney. Was an elder in this church. For many years. Debbie Clowney. Was rebellious. Although like her father. Was a seminary professor. And. Various members of the family. Tried very unsuccessfully.

To share the gospel. With Debbie. She got married. She got divorced. She rebelled against the gospel. Six months before he died. Her father. Shared the gospel. With Debbie.

And Debbie. Threw a shoe at him. And said. Will you ever stop. Going on. Ed Clowney died. And on the night. Ed Clowney died. Debbie Clowney.

Was converted. Debbie Clowney. Sat in the funeral. Where everyone was crying. And she just wanted to say. Isn't this wonderful. Now.

[18:18] If you think back. Of your Christian life. You will be able to tell stories. Similar to that. How are the lost found? The lost are found. When the children of God. Are on their knees.

And to see them for the lost. Point four. The lost are found. When we see the lost. As being lost. I think. I have to train myself. And you have to train yourself.

To not think the best. In this area. To not be naive. We must stop. Romanticizing. The spirituality. Of people.

Who don't have the gospel. Of Greece. And I know. It can feel so judgmental. Can't it? But if you. Don't. You are being. Unloving.

Paul does not. Romanticize. About the faith. Of his own people. So look what he says. Isn't it? Verse two. Of chapter ten. It's a fascinating verse.

[19:12] They are zealous. For Paul does not confuse. Zeal. With real faith. Look what he says. In Romans chapter ten. Verse two. For I bear them witness. That they have a real. A zeal for God. But not according to knowledge.

Now we know. Don't we. You've got to finish. We know that the Jews. You've got to finish. On Saturday. You know that the Jews. Are very zealous for God. Orthodox Jews. They had a passion. And a sincerity. Those who are around today do. Two qualities. That our western culture. Loves. As long as you don't have. Too much of them. Passion and sincerity. But they had a genuine conviction.

And a knowledge of the triune God. They did not have that. And we know that you can be sincere. And sincerely wrong. We've got to get clear on this.

And that is what they were. And here is why he is so explicit about it. The core difference between biblical Christianity and the rest. Is not sincerity. Jehovah Witnesses.

[20:13] Have heaps of it. The difference between biblical Christianity. And the rest. Is not sincerity. Many of your Muslim neighbors.

And your Muslim friends. They are very. Very sincere people. The difference between biblical Christianity. And the rest. Is not passion. Every suicide bomber.

Has that. What is the difference? It is a saving knowledge of God. Through Christ Jesus. And the loss. Will not be found. If we keep giving ourselves permission.

For thinking. That they are in. When they are out. And you will get it. You will really get pressure. From even inside.

The church. There will be pressure. To not have mission to the Jews. Not long ago. The Pope. But in fact. A number of times. The Pope has made.

[21:11] A very clear statement. Speaking to a group of Muslims. That Muslims. And Christians. Worship the same God. I understand. That Islam.

Of all the monotheistic religions. Apart from Judaism. Is the closest of all the religions. To Christianity. I think we can accept that. We share a lot of similar features. About the nature of God. With Islam. In his character.

But do we worship. The same God? Of course we don't. The Quran is explicit. That Jesus is not the son of God. And he didn't die. For the sins of his people. I'm told.

Remarkably often. That you ought not. To be engaging. In evangelism. In the remote Roman Catholics. Or the Orthodox. It's disrespectful. But in what ways.

Did the Jews get it wrong? Well like every religious person. They simply didn't grasp. The gospel of grace. Chapter 10. Verse 3. For being ignorant. Of the righteousness of God.

[22:07] And seeking to establish. Their own righteousness. They did not submit. To God's righteousness. They fell for the mistake. That every religion. Goes for.

Let me summarize. Let me summarize. Five classic eras. Of religious spirituality. Number one. Religion ignores the fact.

That good enough. Will never be good enough. The book of Romans teaches. That God's standards. Are nothing less than perfect. Perfection.

He is a holy God. The pass mark is 100%. Number two. Religion keeps on treating heaven. Or nirvana. Whatever you want to call it. The final destiny.

It treats heaven. Like a wage to be earned. Rather than a gift to be received. By trust. But the truth is. Nothing that by hands I bring. Simply.

[23:04] To your course. I think. Number three. Religion tends to use good works. To buy God. And manipulate his approval. Number four. Religion always has that double edge.

If you're good enough. In religion. You feel proud. And if you're bad enough. Well you end up feeling depressed. And despairing. Religion. Always leaves you.

Either proud. Or petrified. And number five. Worst of all. It always. Always. Disrespects. What Christ has done. At the cross. Because if righteousness. Could be gained by the law.

Then Christ died for nothing. And that is what religion. Says. It says to Jesus. You didn't have to shed your blood for me. Thanks very much.

But the gospel is so simple. And it's so easy to trip over. Isn't it? It always appears too easy. It's beautifully expressed. In Romans chapter 10. Chapter 10. And verse 9. Because if you.

[24:00] Confess with your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart. That God raised him. From the dead. He will be saved. The whole of Romans. Makes that.

Really. Very. Very. Simple point. That the righteous. Will live by faith. And in fact. Once you realise. That people are saved.

By trusting. In the message. Of Christ crucified. Then you're left. With my last point. For the lost. Be found. The gospel. Must be preached. If faith.

In Christ. Saves. And faith. Comes from hearing. Then the gospel. Logic. Demands. For the message. Of Jesus. To be proclaimed. To be announced. To be shared. To be spoken. To be pleaded with.

To be debated. To be discussed. The gospel. Is the power of God. To salvation. For all who believe. And we know.

[ 24 : 56 ] Don't we. We know. That knowledge. Is power. And gospel. Knowledge. Is ultimate power. It determines. Destiny. And with that knowledge.

Comes responsibility. And you and I. Can't shake that. You and I. Have knowledge. Concerning. What will determine. Ultimate destinies.

For people. And so imagine. Keeping the cure. For breast cancer. To yourself. While you're armed. Is having a mastectomy. You can't live. With that reality. That's not a thing.

That you can keep silent over. And if zeal. Without knowledge. Will send you to hell. What is knowledge. Without zeal.

It is downright tragic. Let's look at the logic. Of verses 14 and 15. Can you see that? Paul says this. How then will.

[ 25 : 49 ] They call on him. Who they've. Not believed. And how are they. To believe in him. Of whom they've not heard. And how are they. To hear. Without someone. Preaching. And how are they.

To preach. Unless they're sent. As it is written. How beautiful. Are the feet of those. Who preach the good news. Paul makes it very clear. That the Jewish problem. Is not they haven't heard.

That is not their problem. They have heard. But many have not. The logic is clear. And so I want to say to you. This text. Is not just a text. From missionaries.

Who are sent out. You cannot call on the Lord. Unless you believe in him. And you cannot believe. On the Lord. Unless you've heard of him. And you can only hear. If you've been preached to.

And that can happen. Only if you're sent. It's a simple logic. So remember how it was for you. Who was it? A mother.

[ 26 : 46 ] A friend. A neighbour. A member of the family. A work colleague. A teacher. A teacher in Sunday school. A camp leader.

A friend. An enemy. Sometimes the gospel comes. Just from an enemy. They come into your life. And they. Probably lived some sort of life. That was consistent with the message. They shared their story. At least.

And somewhere along the line. You've got to hear. That Jesus is the way. The truth. And the life. And no one comes to the father. But through him. And by his grace. He brought you to himself. And oh.

How beautiful. Beautiful are the feet. Of those who preach good news. Beautiful feet. And so as a church. We have to be committed.

To this endeavour. For the gospel. Is the power of God. To salvation. And with power comes responsibility. And that of course. Ought to direct us in two ways. And one beyond our shores.

[ 27 : 40 ] And so make sure that we keep. Raising up. We keep sending. Praying. And supporting. And giving the churches abroad. Praying for. Jose Segovia. In Madrid.

And Joe and. Fred Cavill. As they go to North Africa. And Darius. In the work in Warsaw. But I think. We need to understand. That this is our generation. This is our time. In this place. These are our people. And they are our first priority.

And God is not laying. Upon you. The conversion of. The next generation. You're not going to be here. That's for the next generation. Of Christians. And we are not responsible. For the generation that is past.

But we are responsible. For this generation. And those. You live with. Shoulder to shoulder. Fellow citizens. Wherever you live. Or work. The city of which. You are a part of.

[ 28 : 37 ] Somebody has estimated. That in London. Again. We've got to remember. That 75% of statistics. Are made up on the spot. But. Somebody has said. That 65% of people.

In London. Don't know someone. Who is born again. I don't know how on earth. You get to that figure. They don't know. Someone who can tell. The gospel. They live their whole life. Never rubbing shoulders.

With a person. In a meaningful way. Who knows. And loves the Lord Jesus. That is. Three out of five people. In London. Can live their whole life. Missing out on the gospel.

And the only way. They will hear about the gospel. Is probably through the BBC. Or through some. Atheist comedian. Who kind of. Takes a shot at it. In their gigs.

And that will be very helpful. And that's why. I think. Occasionally. It's quite helpful. For us to think like this. And for me to preach. A sermon like this. Because to define.

[ 29 : 31 ] The mission of the church. As filling this building. Or filling the great. New building. Is not good enough. Because there's a big task. Ahead. Of the church in London. 65% live their lives.

Without hearing. Or knowing the gospel. And so what that must mean. Is we must begin. With our family and friends. And our neighbours. We must. That's. That's the priority. But I don't think.

We can end there. And so I think. We must look. To reach out to people. Who are not in our.

Ordinary circle of life. That's one of the reasons. Why we run clubs.

And English language class. And those stars. And so let me give you. Something which I've. Been very negative about. In the past. But I think.

I'm capitulating on. I think. Door knocking. Might help. Now you can do it. In different ways. I've got a great.

[ 30 : 25 ] Opening line for you. Here's my opening line. Relax. I'm not a jungle witness. And I'm not a Mormon. I'm not a jungle witness. And if they laugh.

And you can go from there. We are so fortunate. There are just so many people. In London. And I know it's scary. I know it's really.

Really scary. That you end up praying. That nobody lands on the door. Or you knock so quietly.

That nobody would hear. But go with someone. Who will do all the talking. There are a few people. In this room. More like that. Right.

What's been astounding to me. In a little bit of evangelism. I've done in the last while. That people are far more interested. In wanting to talk about God. Than I am prepared to talk about him. And they are far more prepared.

To listen. Than we are to talk. So what about it? Once a month. On a Saturday morning. Maybe. Should we? If people are successful.

[ 31 : 26 ] With a false gospel. Imagine if you had the true gospel. A successful you'd be. You may not think. It's a suggestion for you.

That's really fine. There's nothing in the Bible. Which says. Thou must doorknock. Don't take that. And feel guilty. But if it's not that. And it may well not be that for you. Then what?

How are we going to reach this generation? Because in Romans chapter 12. And verse 11. It says there.

The time has come. For you to wake up from sleep. Another way of putting it. Which I think the NIV says.

Never be lacking in zeal. Never be lacking in zeal. Let's cast off the works of darkness. And put on the armor of light.

[ 32 : 29 ] Keep your spiritual fervor. Serving the Lord. For many of us. I kid myself on this. We work on a small canvas. Of my life.

My family. My church. Our group of friends. Maybe a little bit of church. But our canvas needs to be much bigger. Jesus said. Look at the fields. Look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest.

They're ripe for harvest. They are more interested in listening. We are prepared to speak. So

brothers and sisters. How are the lost found? When we have a passion for the lost.

And when we see them through the eyes. And compassion of Jesus. How are the lost found? When we understand. That God has his elect out there. Who is calling to himself. He does the conversion.

Not you. How are the lost found? When we bathe our mission in prayer. And we fall to our knees.

As priests of God. In deceding for the lost. How are the lost found?

[ 33 : 27 ] Well when we stop being naive. About their spiritual state. And call a spade a spade. And a lost a lost. So that we can. Not give ourselves.

The permission to be silent. And how are the lost found? By preaching the gospel. Because how can they call on the one? They do not know. Let's pray.