



THE CITY GATES CHURCH

Love God. Love Others.

Romans 10:1-13 **A Heart For The Lost**

Summary: God wants to see people saved, do we?

We've all experienced a time when someone made our life difficult. It might have been intentional, or maybe they were completely unaware (which probably made it worse), but they were hard for us to handle. Who was, or is, that person for you? It could be a single person or a group. Who's the most difficult person for you to deal with? Who is the person who wants to make your life difficult? Is it an ex-girlfriend? A boss? Or someone you thought was a friend? Maybe your own sibling? How do you feel about them?

Now listen to this:

Romans 9:1 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites...

What you need to know is that Paul says this about people who resisted and rejected him. The apostle Paul says *I have great sorrow and continual grief*, and if I could, I would give up my own salvation for the sake of the Jews.

Paul had a tumultuous relationship with his countrymen. Some of them joyfully accepted the gospel and immediately dedicated their lives to God. Many just ignored or dismissed him. But others said, "What do you mean, Paul? We already have our religion, and we don't need anything to change it." In fact, if you don't shut up about all this Jesus stuff, we're going to run you out of town, which they did. Over and over again.

Some violently opposed him. More than once, they arrested him, put him through a religious trial, and whipped him for his 'heresy.' They tried to kill him several times. I think we can say that Paul was not their favorite person. And yet he says of them:

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Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

Church, I want us to marvel at that. I want us to let that really sink in. Paul has this deep burden for the people of Israel, so deep that he's willing to give up his own salvation for them to have it. Now, that's not possible. That's not how this works, but can you appreciate what a radical offer that is?

And it's not a one-time thing. It's not like Paul was having a really emotional day, getting worked up, and saying things that he might have stretched a bit or become dramatic about.

Years later, he would write a letter to the church in Philippi and say

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

He says, death is nothing to me, in fact, it's a pretty good deal – I get to go be with Jesus. Then he goes on to say, But I know that if I stay alive here on earth, it will be helpful to you, so I'm willing to stay.

Church, Paul is willing to go to hell, and he is willing to *not* go to Heaven, for the sake of other people. And not just good people, not just people who are easy to like. Two chapters later, he says

Phil 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

Paul shows sorrow for people resisting and rejecting the gospel. There is no joy in sinners being punished. Instead, there is weeping and great lament. Church, what does this say about how we should feel about those who are not saved?

Moses felt the same way. Interestingly, he, too, had a bit of a tumultuous relationship with Israel. Each time he tried to save them or deliver them, he experienced resistance. You remember the first time, when he still lived in Pharaoh's court, he saw an Egyptian striking an Israelite, so Moses attacked the Egyptian and killed him.

The next day, he saw two Israelites arguing and told them to stop, but they turned on him and said, Or what? Will you kill us like you did the Egyptian? And so Moses fled, worried that the very people he tried to help would report him to Pharaoh. While he was gone, God appeared to him in the burning bush and told Moses that He would use him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt.

When Moses arrived, they weren't too happy to see him at first. Eventually, though, they saw all the miracles of God and followed Moses out of Egypt into freedom. But once they were free, their troubles started again. They murmured and complained about their situation and his leadership.

And then God called them all to Mount Sinai, and He told Moses to come up on the mountain. This is where he received the Ten Commandments. But while Moses is up meeting with God, the people take some of the gold jewelry they brought from Egypt, melt it down, and use it to make a cow statue for worship.

Well, God knows what they're doing, so he sends Moses down to see what's happening and tells him, 'I'm going to judge them and wipe them out.'

So Moses goes down, deals with the situation, and we read

Exodus 32:30 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

In other words, you people have really messed up. But let me see what I can do. He already knows God is righteously angry about their actions. But still, he tries to make a case for mercy and offers himself in exchange.

31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! 32 Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

So here you have two examples, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, of men who were willing to give up their salvation so others, *who made their lives difficult*, might be forgiven and saved.

And now, listen, the easy thing to do from here is to ask – *do you feel this way toward the person or people that make your life difficult?* And we could sit with some of that guilt and condemnation and say we all need to try harder to love our enemies like Scripture says.

And there is some truth to that. We do need to love our enemies.

Do you remember what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount? He said,

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

There's no getting around that. Jesus really said it. And, more than that, I think He meant it. Jesus really does want us to love our enemies, and to do good for them.

But let's face it. That's not easy. That's not natural. That's not normal. For most of us, in reality, it's something we agree with. We nod and say, "Wow, yes, Jesus, that's amazing." But then we close our Bibles or walk out of church and go back to our real lives in the real world, often not doing much of this at all.

And so, there's a way for me to approach this by telling us we all need to try harder. We should be ashamed of ourselves for knowing what Jesus says and not doing it. We should wonder whether we're really Christians or not.

Perhaps you've heard that kind of sermon before. You felt the guilt, you felt the shame, you told yourself you were going to try to do better. But here you are, still pretty much unchanged.

I don't want to preach that sermon. Because as much as I agree that we do need to change, we do need to obey Jesus, follow Jesus, and look a little more like Paul, *who was trying to look like Jesus*, I don't think we get there by trying harder.

I think we get there another way, and it's laid out here in **Romans 10:1**. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

One of the things we say often around here is that you have to receive before you can reflect.

- You have to receive the love of God before you can show it well to others.

- You have to receive forgiveness from God before you can go forgiving others.
- You have to receive spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit from the work of the Holy Spirit in your life before you can show that fruit to others and manifest those gifts in your ministry.

The order of the Great Commandment is important. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Loving God always comes before loving our neighbor.

And when it comes to loving God,

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

So, here's the proper order of things – God loves you. You experience that love. Then He sends you out to show that love to others, including those who are difficult to love.

Friends, if you only hear me say one thing this morning, can you hear me say this:

*If love isn't flowing out of you,
it's because you don't sense the love flowing into you.*

You can't show to others what you have not experienced yourself. And that's especially true if we're talking about showing love to people who aren't like you or who don't like you.

You can't give what you don't have. That makes sense, right? Unless you're the federal government, then you just print more money or raise the debt ceiling, and you can give whatever you want and let other people pay for it. But in the real world, in real lives, *you can't give what you don't have.*

You see, often the reason we don't love others is because we don't realize how much we're loved by God.

- The reason we don't forgive others is because we don't appreciate how much we've been forgiven by God.
- The reason we don't help others is because we don't understand how much we've been helped by God.

That's why I'm convinced the key to understanding how and why Paul was able to love these people who resisted him so much is here in verse 1, [Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.](#)

I believe Paul's heart was filled with a desire for Israel to be saved because his heart had been filled with that desire during times of [prayer to God](#). In other words, *Paul's heart was a reflection of God's heart*. If you're taking notes, you might want to write it down this way:

*Prayer was the proof of Paul's love,
and it also produced his love*

Paul didn't just pray for Israel because he loved them; *he loved them because he prayed for them*, and that's something he learned from God.

If you want to know what God is like the best thing to do is to look at Jesus. And Jesus clearly had a deep affection and desire for the people of Israel. He spent His entire adult life ministering to the people of this one nation. Even though there were Romans and people from other surrounding nations living in Israel, the Jews were the primary target of His time and ministry.

And when the time was right, He came riding into Jerusalem, their capital city, on a donkey, in fulfillment of prophecy, presenting Himself as the savior they had been promised for so long. Some received Him, but most were not moved. And look at how Jesus reacts:

[Luke 19:41](#) Now as He drew near, He saw the city [and wept over it](#), [42 saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.](#)

Why did Paul care about the salvation of the people of Israel, even when they resisted him? *Because Jesus cared about the salvation of the people of Israel, even when they resisted Him.*

When Paul cared about people, he looked like Jesus. His heart desired good things for them because his heart was shaped by God, filled by God, warmed by God.

Do you see how this is a different message than "why don't you love your enemies?!? Get it together and do what you're supposed to do."

Church, we are supposed to love our enemies. But not because they're so lovable and not because we're so spiritual, but *because our hearts have been shaped and molded, filled and moved by God* – because we look out on the world through His eyes and see things His way.

That doesn't come naturally to most of us. It comes a little easier to some of us than others, but still, there's a difference between natural compassion and God-

given concern. If you're a peacemaker by nature or naturally concerned for others, that's good, the world needs people like you, but that's not what we're talking about here.

There is such a thing as toxic empathy, and there's a lot of it going around these days. People on the progressive side of society have spent decades trying to out-nice those on the conservative side, positioning themselves as advocates or allies of various groups and shaming anyone who dares to oppose them.

That is not what we're talking about here. Notice, that Jesus, Paul, and Moses, all agree – *the people have sinned*. They need to repent. They need to find forgiveness and renewal.

This is not a call to change your theology and focus on 'acceptance.' No. It's weeping and heaviness in the soul because *people persist in their sin* and won't accept the free offer of forgiveness, transformation, and renewal that is offered to them in Jesus' name. And if they continue down that path, they're going to harm themselves and others for eternity. Their souls are in danger.

There are two things I want to say about that. First, do you understand that this is the same kind of love and concern that God has for you? Do you appreciate the fact that God sought you when you were a sinner, showed you His love, and patiently, persistently reached out to you?

Some of us are so far removed from our sinful past, or so normalized in our Christian families, that we don't appreciate the miracle of our salvation – *that it happened because God loved us this way*. He paid a tremendous personal price to give us what we now have and to prepare what lies ahead for us.

Second, this shows how God still sees the people we have trouble with, including the Jews. It really is God's desire to save people, even *those who resist Him* – we'll get there next week, but look down at

Romans 10:21 But to Israel he says:

*"All day long I have stretched out My hands
To a disobedient and contrary people."*

I want to say this plainly – we often look at people and think of people differently than God does. It's easy to do. You get offended by someone, you get hurt by someone, you see someone doing things that you don't agree with, and now your heart is against that person or that group.

But then you have to ask: Does my heart match the heart of God? Because God's heart is big enough to call someone disobedient and contrary and still reach out a hand of salvation to them. Can we let God transform us so that we mirror Him?

Yes. Not only can we, we should. How do we get there? Well, remember what we said earlier, prayer was the proof of Paul's love, but prayer also produced God's love.

Take whoever it is that you're struggling with and drag both your heart and their face before God and pray, God help me to see this person, or these people, the way You do. God help me to think about them the way you do. God would change both my heart and theirs so that each of us aligns with You?

Church, I want to challenge you to do something difficult this morning – something that may change your life. I want to encourage you to present your heart like an empty bucket to God and ask Him to put whatever burden He wants to in it. Are you willing to ask God to calibrate your heart to care about the things and people He wants you to care about?

That might make your life hard. Paul's love for Israel made his life harder. But didn't Jesus' love for people make His life harder too?

Can you do that? Can you make yourself available as an ambassador of Christ? To show His care for and concern toward people who are hard to reach or hard to love or who may be easy to get along with, until it comes to Jesus. They don't want to hear about it. Can you care about them, pray for them, and feel about them the way God does?

Friends, it is really, really, easy to get caught up in our to-do lists and dealing with all the issues we have going on in our lives. It's really, really, easy to focus on the demands of life in the flesh and miss what it means to [walk in the Spirit](#) each day. You don't do it on purpose, you don't mean to do it, you just get busy. Your attention goes in another direction. You don't take much time to pray. And slowly your heart looks less and less like the heart of God. You get shaped by the things and people around you.

You still love God. You still think of yourself as a Christian. You still make it to church sometimes, but how much does your heart look like His?

If you're not careful, it's really easy to become like Israel – caught up in your own life and religion and missing out on what God wants to do. And what does God want to do? Re-establish a personal relationship with people. Read with me:

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

One of the messages we see over and over in Romans is, it's possible to be very religious and very wrong. It's possible to be very sincere and very wrong. It's possible to be zealous about God or about a cause, and be wrong.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, *"The man who does those things shall live by them."* 6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, *"Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' "* (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, *" 'Who will descend into the abyss?' "* (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"* (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

Paul is quoting from the Old Testament here, from the book of Exodus and he's telling people – you don't find salvation by climbing up to heaven on your own, or by plunging down into the depths on your own, salvation is right here, out in the open, easy for you to find, if you will receive it by faith. And here's what it looks like:

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, *"Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."* 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For *"whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*

Salvation is that simple. Not easy, but simple. It's not complex. It's just about surrendering your life to the Lordship of Christ. We'll come back to this passage again next week and draw more out of it. But for now, I want to highlight: the central defining feature of the Christian life is saying Jesus is Lord. He is right about everything in life and I am not.

That's how you join the team. That's how you become saved. And once you're saved that's how you get to the place where you have **great sorrow and**

continual grief over those who are lost. You say Jesus is Lord. He gets to shape the way I view myself, the way I view the world, and the way I view others. He gets to teach me to care deeply about people who are disobedient and contrary. He gets to teach me how to love my neighbor and to tell me who my neighbor is.

I think the best way for us to end this morning is to take some time to pray.

If you need to confess that your heart is not in the right place with someone – tell God now.

If you need to confess that your heart is not right with God – do that now – ask for forgiveness, ask to be born again. He'll do it.

If you have someone or something heavy on your heart, lift them up to God right now.

Whoever you are, whatever your situation – tell Jesus that He is Lord and ask Him to shape your heart so that it looks more like his now than it did when you walked in. Tell Him you want to look at people the way He does, treat people the way He does, speak to people the way He does...even the difficult ones.

Let's pray.



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Sermon Outline

Romans 10:1-13 A Heart For The Lost

13 July 2025

- **Summary:** God wants to see people saved, do we?

I. Introduction: Facing Difficult People

- Key Point: Reflect on the person or group who has made your life difficult.

I. Paul's Heart for His Opponents

- Scripture: Romans 9:1–5; Phil1:21–23; 3:17–19
- Key Point: Paul expresses deep sorrow and willingness to sacrifice his salvation for the Jews who rejected him.
- Key Point: Paul's heart's desire and prayer is for Israel's salvation despite their opposition.
- Key Point: Paul weeps over enemies of the cross, showing sorrow, not joy, over their rejection.

II. Moses' Intercession for Israel

- Scripture: Exodus 32:30–32
- Key Point: Moses offers himself to atone for Israel's sin, mirroring Paul's sacrificial love.

III. Jesus' Command to Love Enemies

- Scripture: Matthew 5:43–48; Luke 19:41–42
- Key Point: Jesus calls us to love enemies and pray for those who persecute us, reflecting God's heart.
- Key Point: Jesus weeps over Jerusalem's rejection, showing God's love for the resistant.

IV. The Source of Love: Receiving God's Love

- Scripture: 1 John 4:19; Romans 10:21
- Key Point: God's persistent love for a "disobedient and contrary" Israel models His heart for all.

V. Prayer: The Proof and Producer of Love

- Key Point: Paul's love for Israel is shaped through prayer, reflecting God's heart.
- Practical Application: Pray for those you struggle with to see them as God does.

VI. The Simplicity of Salvation

- Key Point: Salvation comes through confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in His resurrection.
- Key Point: Submitting to Jesus as Lord shapes our hearts to love others, including the difficult.

Conclusion: Aligning Our Hearts with God's

- Key Point: Pray to let Jesus shape your heart to mirror His love for others.
- Call to Action: Confess misaligned hearts, seek salvation, or lift up burdens in prayer.

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Group Application & Discussion Guide

1. Reflecting on Difficult Relationships

- The sermon began by asking us to think about a person or group who has made life difficult. Without sharing names, what challenges do you face in loving someone who resists or opposes you? How does Paul's example of sorrow for his opponents (Romans 9:1–5) encourage you to view these relationships differently?
- *Cross-Reference:* Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. How do these characteristics of love (patient, kind, not easily angered) challenge or inspire you in dealing with difficult people?

2. Paul's Heart of Sacrifice

- Paul expressed such deep love for the Jews that he was willing to give up his salvation for them (Romans 9:1–5; 10:1). What does this radical love teach you about God's heart for those who reject Him? How can this inspire you to pray for someone who seems far from God?
- *Cross-Reference:* Read John 15:12–13. Jesus says the greatest love is to lay down one's life for others. How can you “lay down” your own desires or comfort to show love to someone difficult this week?

3. Receiving God's Love to Love Others

- The sermon emphasized that we love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). How have you experienced God's love in your life, and how can reflecting on that love help you show grace to others?
- *Cross-Reference:* Read Ephesians 3:17–19. Paul prays that we grasp the depth of Christ's love. How might understanding this love more fully change the way you interact with difficult people?

4. Prayer as the Proof and Producer of Love

- The sermon highlighted that Paul's prayer for Israel showed and shaped his love (Romans 10:1). How can praying for someone you struggle with change your heart toward them? Share a story (if you have one) of how prayer impacted your feelings for someone.

5. The Simplicity of Salvation

- Romans 10:9–13 explains that salvation comes through confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in His resurrection. How does submitting to Jesus as Lord shape your perspective on loving others? Why is it important to keep this simple truth at the center of your faith?

6. Aligning Your Heart with God's

- The sermon challenged us to pray for God to shape our hearts to mirror His (Romans 10:21; Luke 19:41–42). What's one specific way you can invite God to change how you view a difficult person or group this week?
- *Cross-Reference:* Read Psalm 51:10–12. David prays for a clean heart and renewed spirit. How can this prayer inspire you to seek God's transformation in your attitudes toward others?