

If you've ever experienced the breakdown of a relationship whether it's a marriage or friendship, you'll know that it can be painful for everyone involved, and the hurt can take a long time to heal.

So, for example the actor Johnny Depp and his wife Amber Heard have recently played out in the media all the gory details that caused the breakdown of their own relationship.

Well in that reading from Romans the context behind the headlines is that God's relationship with the Jews has broken down.

So, talking about God's covenant relationship with the people of Israel one commentator says this:

Sometimes they served God, often they rebelled, sometimes they repented. But they were always his people. Until now!

You see God the Father had provided one eternal way to belong to him, faith in his Son, but God's chosen people rejected had rejected him.

As a result, Paul's argument up to this point is that God's relationship with Israel has broken down because of their rejection of Jesus.

Chapter 10v1 says:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

In other words, Paul gives the Jews credit by recognising their zeal for God and has sympathy with them because of his own personal experience.

You see before his conversion Paul was someone who zealously followed Old Testament law but rejected Christ.

And so, his heart's heavy because he knows the Jews can never be justified without trusting the Cross of Jesus which is a stumbling block to them.

And so, although these Jews are passionate about their faith; and their enthusiasm is second to none, Paul says they're trying to get right with God in the wrong way.

And the tragedy is that their faith and zeal are misguided.

You see verse 4 says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Or to put it another way:

Jesus has put an end of trying to get right with God through our own personal achievements, self-effort, and good works.

And we see how far the Jews were willing to go in verse 5 don't we.

It says:

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness of based on faith says:

Do not say in your heart who will ascend to heaven? (that is to bring Christ down), or who will descend into the abyss? (that is to bring Christ up from the dead).

In other words, Paul says you don't have to try and do impossible feats to climb up to heaven, because Jesus has come to us.

And you don't have to do the impossible by plumbing the lowest depths to get right with God, because Jesus died and rose again.

No, Paul says to become righteous and obtain forgiveness, you simply put your trust in Jesus, because as verse 9 says:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

And it's only when a person can say that and mean it with the whole of their being; that their broken relationship with God is healed and restored.

You see a Christian isn't someone who relies on their own efforts.

Instead they simply put their trust and confidence in Jesus Christ alone who died and rose again to save them; and they unashamedly confess that fact.

So, listen to this:

Those who thus believe, as the Bible promises, will never be let down. Unlike the striving Jew in this chapter, who trying to get right with God by his own efforts, will never succeed. No such disappointment awaits those who trust Christ; however, because those who believe are certainly saved.

And this salvation is available to everyone who confesses Christ.

So, Verse 9 says:

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

But the mistake these Jews make as I've already said is reject Jesus because they think they can save themselves.

As a result, the relationship between God and his people is broken.

And I have to ask the question this morning what are you putting your trust in to save you from sin? Yourself, or Jesus?

Secondly, as a result of that broken relationship, Paul's passion is for his fellow Jews to accept Christ as Lord.

Verse 1 says:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God is that they may be saved.

Well I wonder if that's our passion for our families, friends and neighbours who don't know Christ?

On a stormy Sunday evening, Edward Payson a famous 19th century preacher conducted a service that had only one person in the congregation.

Anyway a few months later, this lone worshipper went to visit Payson and said this:

"I was led to the Saviour through that service."

"For whenever you talked about sin and salvation, I glanced around to see to whom you referred, but since there was no one else but me, I had no alternative but to lay every word to my own heart and conscience!"

In verse 14 Paul says:

How then will they, (the Jews), call on him, in whom they have not believed?

Or you could say how will our friends, family, and neighbours call on Jesus, in whom they have not believed.

Paul goes on:

And how are they to believe in him of whom they've never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

As it is written how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

Or to quote John Stott you could put it like this:

People are saved because Christ sends heralds, heralds preach, people hear, hearers believe, believers call out to God, and those who call out to him are saved.

You see if I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe wholeheartedly that God raised him from the dead, I'll want to share that good news.

And I'll want to be as passionate about my unbelieving friends and family knowing him as Paul was for his fellow Jews.

Now of course that doesn't mean that every Christian has to become an overseas missionary or full time minister, but we do have the responsibility for sharing the good news of the gospel with people we know, because we're all called to be heralds.

And as a church we're also responsible for sending missionaries and preachers in the world, praying for them, and supporting them financially.

And it's a lovely image in verse 15:

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!

You see it's the image of a runner coming from battle with news of either victory or defeat.

And so, the lookout on the city wall would wait anxiously for news of the battle by watching out for any signs of a dust cloud on the horizon being stirred by the feet of the runner.

And these lookouts were able to tell from a distance if it was good news or bad news.

So, for example if the runner ran with a heavy lumbering stride it meant defeat, but if it the news was good there was speed and enthusiasm in the stride as the runner brought news of victory.

And so, the most beautiful sight for the lookout was to see feet flying with joy and excitement as they brought good news from the battle front.

So, Doctor R. C. Sproul says this:

God appoints human messengers as vessels of the greatest treasure that we could possibly find: The Good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ. There is no greater privilege in all the world than to bear that treasure to someone else, and to tell them the story of Christ.

Paul says:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God is that they might be saved.

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!

And so finally let's pray for our unbelieving friends and family and ask God to give us Paul's passion for the lost and let's search our hearts and ask who we're trusting to save us, ourselves.... Or Jesus