

Necessary Knowledge

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[0 : 00] I'd like you to open up your Bibles.

If you have a copy of the Scriptures, open up to Romans chapter 10. If you didn't bring a copy of the Scriptures with you, or perhaps you're using another translation, not the one that I'm using, the English Standard Version, and it's hard for you to follow along sometimes, you're welcome to grab one of the pew Bibles that are scattered around in the chairs and simply turn to page 946.

Everything we're doing this morning will be on page 946. We're not going to be jumping anywhere this morning, so it'd be very easy for you to follow along if you're using one of those pew Bibles. Otherwise, you guys should be in Romans chapter 10.

I'm excited to begin Romans chapter 10 this morning. It's one of my favorite chapters in the Bible, and it begins really, really well. It begins on a high note here, as we're going to see.

So that we can better understand the gospel that we're going to challenge later on in the book to proclaim to all the nations. So, I would like you guys, if you've turned there, to Romans chapter 10 to stand to your feet, and we'll read God's word together.

[1 : 11] The Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter 10, verse 1, Let's pray.

Thank you for this word, Father. Thank you for this truth. Thank you for the clarity of the gospel here. And I pray that nothing that I would say this morning would make complicated that which is simple, or would direct our eyes away from the simple truth of the gospel to any other issue this morning, but that we would remain focused on your word, and your gospel revealed here.

I ask this in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. Well, we are in the midst of a really strange, strange political season.

I found myself wondering this week if we were living in 2016 or 1516, because politicians were arguing with the Pope, and they're going back and forth. It's really bizarre.

What century are we in here where the target of the politicians is the Pope, and the target of the Pope are politicians? It's just kind of strange the things that are going on. The Pope made a statement this week, and it was pretty easy to see who he was directing the statement towards, but he made a statement this week in which he said that anyone who's wanting to build walls rather than build bridges is not a Christian.

[2 : 56] And he said that's not the gospel. It was clearly aimed at Donald Trump, who was never shy to respond. And so he responded back saying that leaders, especially Christian leaders, should not be judging other people's religion or faith.

And then the media sort of took those statements and ran with them. I ran, in fact, one article this week where one columnist actually called upon the Pope and said the Pope needs to go to confession and repent of having challenged someone's faith, and then he needs to apologize directly to Donald Trump for the whole flap.

And I thought to myself, have any of these people read the Bible? Have any of them opened the New Testament and bothered to look at the words of Jesus or the words of the Apostle Paul? Because what is Paul not doing in this chapter and in this paragraph if he's not judging someone else's salvation?

He is saying very clearly here that he does not believe that his fellow Jews are, in fact, saved. They don't possess salvation.

Notice what he says. He says, My heart's desire and prayer to God for them, and them are the Jews. He's had them on his mind for the last chapter. For them is that they may be saved, automatically implying that they are not saved.

[4 : 14] In fact, he began Romans chapter 9, the beginning of this section in Romans, by saying that he himself could wish that he could be accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of his brothers, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

Again, implying that he believes that his Jewish kinsmen, his brothers according to the flesh, are themselves accursed and cut off from Christ.

And so Paul is saying throughout this entire section, he's saying there are people we can objectively look and determine that they are headed towards hell.

They do not know Christ in a saving way. They do not have the hope of eternal life. And Paul's response to that is not to point out to them and mock them.

It's not to ridicule them. Paul's response to that is a genuine, deep, heartfelt sorrow on behalf of those that he sees that are clearly lost.

[5 : 11] And he says that the desire of his heart, and indeed the content of his prayer, is very frequently that those who are lost, that he knows are lost, that they might be saved.

That's what he desperately wants. So nothing that he writes here is written in a tone of condescension. Nothing that he writes here is written as sort of mocking and laughing and pointing out those who do not know what he knows or do not have what he has.

This is Paul saying, I wish, I pray, the desire of my heart is that those who are not saved might be saved. But he does not stop there.

In fact, much of what he says in this paragraph is a restatement of what he said in the last paragraph of Romans chapter 9. So if a lot of what I say this morning sounds very familiar and you think, I think he just preached this last week.

It's not my fault. Paul is saying again in other language what he said last week. And we don't skip over any verses. So even if it ends up being repetitive, we repeat ourselves because there's a reason why the Apostle Paul repeats himself.

[6 : 16] But he does it in new language, in fresh language. So I want you to look briefly at the way that this paragraph is kind of put together because it's going to help us to understand the argument that Paul is making.

He just makes a statement in verse 1 about the fact that the Jews are not saved and he wants them to be saved. And then from then on, every verse begins with the word for.

Or we might translate that word as because. So from verse 2 on, he's developing an argument. Why does he want them to be saved? So he's going to now give reasons why they're not saved.

Because in verse 2. And then another, because in verse 3, clarifying verse 2. And then another, because at the beginning of verse 4. So this is laid out as a very clear, logical argument from one step to the next.

And so we need to be aware of that as we walk our way through here. But it also makes it very easy to walk our way through this passage. We just need to look at each four, understand what he's giving as a reason for his previous statement, and then we'll have come to a clear understanding.

[7 : 19] So let's focus on verse 2 to begin with, okay? He has said that they're not saved. Now he's going to tell us why they're not saved. He says, for I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

You might want to underline that phrase, not according to knowledge. That's what's lacking, Paul says. What is not lacking is passion for God, or excitement about God and some of the things of God.

That's not what is lacking for Paul's Jewish kinsmen. I mean, no doubt there were secular Jews at the time of Paul. This is their secular Jews today who did not observe the Jewish religion.

And so he's not making a blanket statement about every individual Jewish person that he's ever known, that they all have a zeal for God. But given Paul's own background, having once been a Pharisee, been a religious leader among the Jews, and a rising star within their ranks, he's able to say with a clear conscience that he can testify about the Jewish people, he can testify about them, that they do indeed have a zeal or a passion for God.

He is aware of that. So the issue here that leads Paul to conclude that they are not saved has nothing to do with their passion for God, which is surprising today in our culture.

[8 : 40] Because what our culture will say to you oftentimes is, all that matters is whether or not you actually fervently believe the things that you believe. All that matters is that you have some conviction about something.

It doesn't matter what the thing is, as long as you are, and the word is often thrown out, sincere, and I take that to mean, as long as you have some zeal and passion for something, that's all that matters in our culture.

Nobody wants to look and examine whether or not that something is true. All that matters is long as you're sincere, zealous, passionate about something out there, then you're safe and you're good to go.

But Paul testifies to the exact opposite. Because these people have that. They have sincerity. This isn't a false piety that they're demonstrating at all. They're sincere in their beliefs.

What Paul says is that the things that they are believing are not correct, and that's why they are not saved. Notice his reasoning. I bear witness about them.

[9 : 42] They have a zeal for God, but, here's the but, not according to knowledge. They don't have the right information. They don't have the right knowledge.

In other words, their doctrine is wrong, therefore they are not saved. And we find that to be strange today, even in many churches.

Many churches want to downplay the importance of the teachings of the church. They want to downplay the importance of doctrine, and don't even like to use a word, an old-timey word like doctrine.

In fact, when you talk about indoctrinating someone today, that's viewed as a bad thing and a negative thing. Whereas in the past, to indoctrinate someone was simply to pass on the only truth that could give them life.

It was to teach them the things that they needed to know. And so we have turned what Paul views as necessary knowledge for salvation, we have turned that into something to be brushed aside in favor of the very thing that Paul says is not adequate.

[10 : 42] And that is a passion that's not based in the truth. We have done that over and over and over as a culture, and even in many of our churches we have done that. But Paul makes a very clear point here, that certain knowledge is necessary for salvation.

I can think of, for instance, it matters what you actually believe about who Jesus is. It's not just a matter of believing or stating that you believe in Jesus.

It matters what you think about who this Jesus is about whom you speak so frequently. I've told this story before, but there, at some, a few years ago, there was, and I guess his career did not take off like he thought, but there was a sort of rising pop star within the ranks of the Disney pop stars.

I don't know, if you don't have little kids, you're not even aware that that's like a whole class of pop star. Okay, but the rising Disney pop stars, and their hope is always to break out of Disney and become sort of a mainstream pop artist.

Well, several years ago, this has been a long time ago, there was actually a rising pop star named Chris Trousdale. Now, he actually pronounced his name totally incorrectly. He said Trousdale. He's totally wrong, but that's okay.

[11 : 53] You know, he's from further up north. They don't know how to say Trousdale. I understand. But it's spelled the same, okay? He had a different middle name than me, but when Allie and I were finished with school, and we moved back to this area, and we actually had a house.

We're no longer living in seminary housing, and we had a house. We thought, well, why don't we get a landline? We hadn't had a landline in forever. We just used our cell phones. And so we got a landline, which meant automatically that unless you request it, your number is then listed in the phone book.

And we had voicemail and everything that comes along with it. And I began getting voicemails that were left from clearly very young teenage girls, 13 and 14-year-olds, giddily laughing that they had found Chris Trousdale's number, and they wanted me to call them back.

And a couple of times, I actually answered the phone. One time, I answered the phone, and just to see how much information she would get, this girl gave her name, where she lived, I mean, all the kind of information that a creepy person would want.

And then I said, I need you to know that I am not the person that you're looking for. And if I were a creep, you would just give me all the information I need to hurt you very badly. Please never do this again. She hung up, and she's probably traumatized to this day.

[13 : 02] But nevertheless, they thought they were getting a hold of Chris Trousdale. I mean, they had the spelling right, they had the name right, but they had the wrong person entirely. To merely have the name right is not to have the right person.

And many people have the name of Jesus right, but they have no clue about who He is. There are entire religions that are quote-unquote devoted to Jesus, and yet they don't know the biblical Jesus.

So we might say that some of the knowledge necessary for salvation is actually understanding who Christ is, that He is indeed the second person of the Trinity, that He is the God-man.

He is God in flesh. You need to know that in order to be saved. In fact, John goes so far as to say that anyone who denies that Christ has come in the flesh is anti-Christ.

They do not know Him in a saving way. But that's, interestingly enough, not Paul's focus here. It's not Paul's focus in the book of Romans. It's not Paul's focus here in Romans chapter 10.

[13 : 59] The knowledge that he has in mind is a different doctrine. A different, no less important, no less significant doctrine than who we believe Jesus to be.

And that is the doctrine of how we go about getting saved by the true Jesus. Notice what he says. He defines the knowledge that they are lacking. He doesn't just say knowledge. In verse 3, we start with the word for, so he's going to explain verse 2.

They're lacking knowledge. Here's why. Because being ignorant of the righteousness of God. That's what they're ignorant of. They are ignorant of the righteousness of God.

They don't know how to attain a right standing before God. And in fact, he tells us what their error is in the next statement. They're ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, their own what?

Their own righteousness. They did not submit to God's righteousness. So Paul here holds up two concepts of righteousness. And if you'll recall from last week, we defined righteousness here in the context of Romans 9 and 10.

[15 : 09] Righteousness here is a right standing before God. That's what we're after. We're after being on judgment day, being able to be declared by God, this person's righteous. This person is not going to receive my wrath.

This person is not going to hell because in my sight, they're righteous. That's what we all want at the end of life. It doesn't matter how well you live your life here. If you arrive on judgment day and God doesn't say, in my sight you are righteous, then you are doomed for all of eternity.

Have 90 years of a pleasant life, but don't deal with this issue and you will have an eternity of pain and suffering and torment that is deservedly yours because of your sins.

So we need to know, how do we obtain that status before God? How can we be declared righteous by God? And Paul says, you can either try to establish your own righteousness, and that's what he accuses his fellow kinsmen of doing.

You can try to establish your own righteousness. That is, you can try to obey all the rules. You can try to get everything right so that at the end of your life, maybe the good will outweigh the bad, and God will say, well, you're pretty good.

[16 : 16] You're in. You're righteous. Or on the other hand, you can receive what he calls the righteousness of God. Those are the only two possibilities held out.

We're going to see next week why it's impossible to actually establish your own righteousness. I'll give you the short answer here because you are not righteous. You are a sinner and you cannot, you cannot fully and perfectly obey the law of God, and that's what's required.

And since you cannot do it, that way is cut off from you. Paul says his kinsmen are apparently unaware of that. They don't know that that way is cut off. They still think that they can get a righteous standing before God by seeking to establish their own.

He says, no, they need another path, and there is another path. There is what he calls God's righteousness. And here, it is not God's personal righteousness himself. This is the gift of righteousness that God gives to those who believe.

This is God declaring you to be righteous. I count you as righteous, even though he knows that you are not righteous. But the Jews have not sought this kind of righteousness, Paul says, seeking to establish their own.

[17 : 27] They did not submit to, that is, they did not receive and accept the righteousness as a gift that God offers. They did not accept that. And I would argue that we are far too comfortable oftentimes when we think of people that surround us, be they family members or neighbors or coworkers or friends, we are far too comfortable in assuming that because they say some good things about God on occasion or because they sometimes go to church or because they've indicated some sort of religious background, we are far too comfortable and we far too easily rest ourselves in going, yeah, I think they're a Christian.

Sure, they're a Christian. I mean, they talk about God sometimes. I know they go to church sometimes. They live a pretty decent life. I mean, they must be a Christian. They must be. And we rest in that comfort.

It makes us feel better. It lessens the burden on us to actually confront them and say, I don't think you know how to be right with God. I don't think you've gotten this right. It makes us feel better to know that that burden is off of us.

But the reality is we need to be more like Paul. We need to actually look and see what do people around us believe. So often we will hear people say, when you begin to talk about whether or not someone is a Christian, and I think this probably lies behind the whole flap between the Pope and Donald Trump this week.

So often we will hear people say is, well, you can't see in someone's heart, so you can't judge their heart. And that's true. But you know what you can see? You know what you can judge? What they say they believe.

[19 : 00] Right? And so if they get the information wrong from the start, never mind the heart issue, we can deal with that in a moment. If the information that's necessary to know for salvation is wrong from the start, then they're not saved.

And yet, we very rarely build up the courage to say, what do you believe? What do you believe about Jesus? What do you believe about how a person gets to heaven?

We avoid those questions by comforting ourselves and saying, I'm pretty sure they're a Christian. I don't know how many funerals I have preached, where I've sat down, dozens of them, where I've sat down with family members.

The first question I ask is, did he know Jesus? Was he a believer? Was he a Christian? And 75% of the time, the answer is, I'm pretty sure he was.

I'm pretty sure he was. And I'll say, okay, why do you think that? And they began to give the answers. Well, I know he prayed sometimes, especially I know towards the end when he was sick, he was praying all the time. I know he didn't go to church regularly, but he went sometimes.

[20 : 03] And I know that he said he believed in Jesus at some point. I know that. And yet, they cannot tell me, did this person ever actually trust in Christ to save them from their sins?

They cannot tell me that. It's not the appropriate time for me to there, accuse their dead relative of being in hell. You never do that, but it's an opportunity to clearly present the gospel to those who are still alive.

But so often, we just want to comfort ourselves and just assume that people around us are saved. When Paul says there are some clear tests, and one of them is this, are they seeking to establish their own righteousness?

Are they trying to earn it? Or are they resting in the gift of God's righteousness? Are they resting in it? He'll explain what that means a little bit more in the last verse of our paragraph, which is actually probably the more difficult verse to understand in this whole paragraph.

He says in verse 4, again, building off of the idea of a failure to submit to God's righteousness by the Jews, he says, for or because Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

[21 : 16] Now, before I can even move ahead, I kind of need to let you guys know where the difficulty is in this verse. And if you're reading other translations, you'll see that it's translated different ways, and so you might be aware of the difficulty.

But the main issue in this verse, in terms of us correctly understanding this verse, is what does Paul mean when he says end? What does he mean when he says, for Christ is the end of the law?

What does that mean? The Greek word that he uses here is very similar to our English word for end, in that we can use it in two different ways. We can use it in what for us is the most common way of using the word end, which means something has come to its completion.

It's over with. It's done. All right? In which case, Paul would be saying that Christ has put an end to the law in its entirety. He's put an end to it.

It's over with. We don't have to think about it anymore. It's out of sight, out of mind, pushed away. That could be the point that he's making. On the other hand, the word end can at times mean goal.

[22 : 16] It can mean your purpose, where you're headed. So one of the most well-known catechisms that there are, the Westminster Catechism, some of you may be familiar with it, begins by saying that the chief end, that goal, the purpose of life, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

And so we do at times, although not as often today in today's modern English, but still at times we use the word end to refer to a goal or a purpose. The purpose of someone's life.

The end of someone's life. The goal of their life. Or what's your end in taking on this project? We mean, what's your goal? We don't mean how are you going to finish it. We just mean, what's your goal?

Why are you doing this? What's the purpose? What are you aiming towards? And so the issue is, in what way is Paul using the word end? Because the Greek word telos can mean end, as in the end of something, the finishing of something.

Or it can mean goal, as in the purpose of something. If it simply means end, then it just means that the law is finished. We don't have to deal with the law anymore. Or, on the other hand, it might mean goal, in that the goal of the law all along was to point us to Christ.

[23 : 26] Christ is the purpose, the goal to which the law was pointing. Now, both of those translations have a lot of merit to them.

Especially if you take the first, and you say that what Paul means when he says Christ is the end of the law, if you say, he doesn't mean the end of the law, the termination of the law in every respect.

He just means the end of the law in regards to righteousness, to establishing your own righteousness. Because he says, more specifically, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

So what Paul might be saying is, when you come to know Christ, that puts an end to your attempts to use the law to establish your own righteous standing before his sight.

And we could see easily that fits the overall context. That's a theologically true statement. Once you know Jesus in a saving way, though good works should flow out of your life, no longer will you be seeking to earn a right standing before God, but you will be resting in the free gift of righteousness that God gives.

[24 : 29] And so it may indeed be that that is Paul's point. And that is honestly how I have interpreted this verse for quite some time. But the more time I spent on it this week, or the last two weeks, I began to lean a bit in the other direction.

And I'll explain to you why I'm leaning in the other direction of thinking the end means goal. One of the reasons is that as you look back throughout history, and especially when I'm confronted with a difficult problem in translating Greek, Greek, all right?

I'm not a native Greek speaker. None of you are. When I'm confronted with a difficult problem in translating Greek, I prefer to go as far back in history and find people who actually spoke ancient Greek, the Greek that Paul was writing in, and see how they understood the meaning of the word.

And if they indicate that there's some kind of ambiguity and it's confusing, then I'll go, okay, it is confusing. But if you look at these people who spoke the language that Paul was writing in very early in the church, so we're talking like the, you know, the 100s, the 200s A.D.

If you look and they just assume across the board, all of them, that it has a particular meaning, then you have good reason of thinking, these guys who spoke this and wrote in this every day and preached in this every week probably have a better grasp on the natural meaning of the language than do people who live 2,000 years later, even if they're an expert in Greek, which I'm not.

[25 : 51] So I looked at that and found that these early, what we call church fathers, whenever they did comment on Romans 10, 4, they all just sort of assumed that telos means goal.

That's how they took it. That's how I assumed it. So that's some strong evidence that perhaps Paul is using the word here in terms of goal and not the finishing of something, not the completion of something.

But there's better evidence, I think, even within the text itself. If you'll recall from last week, last week, there are two aspects of last week's sermon that I think pushed me towards goal.

And one is that we saw in the last paragraph of chapter 9 that Paul uses a lot of racing language, the kind of words that you would use to describe a foot race perhaps in the Olympics or some other kind of sports back then.

It's the exact same kind of language you would use to describe a foot race. He talks about them pursuing something, attaining something, obtaining something. He uses that language. That's race language in ancient Greek.

[26 : 51] That's the kind of language that we have there. And then when you realize that the word telos is often used to indicate the goal of the race, the prize that you win at the end of the race, it's easy to conclude that Paul, at the end of this little section here that starts in verse 30 of chapter 9 and ends in verse 4 of chapter 10, in this little section here, it makes sense for him to bring back that racing metaphor right at the end to really sort of seal the deal here.

So I think he's drawing on that same language again. So that's one reason. Another reason why I'm leaning towards goal. But one more reason that comes from last week's sermon is that when we came to the phrase in verse 31 that's literally translated that Israel pursued a law of righteousness.

I said last week that I think the law of righteousness that he speaks of there is the law that points toward righteousness. In that the goal of the law, the purpose of the law all alone is to point us not to ourselves and the righteousness that we can obtain, but to this free gift of righteousness that God offers through Christ.

That's what the law was pointing towards all along. That was the goal of the law so that the context of last week's paragraph and now this week's paragraph, if he is doing what I think he's doing, he's restating in different language what he said in the previous paragraph.

If that's what's happening here, then he's saying in verse 4 that the goal of the law all along was Christ, Christ, but specifically the goal of the law or Christ being the end of the law is for a specific purpose, that is, for righteousness to everyone who believes.

[28 : 33] The law all along was pointing ahead to Jesus, the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, the suffering servant of Isaiah.

the law in its entirety was always pointing ahead to Jesus because it is through faith in him that we receive the free gift of righteousness.

That's the law that's been telling us all along. So what the law was telling the people of Israel all along was look to the promise, look to the one who is coming over and over.

The law holds out the impossibility of completely obeying it and earning life through the law and over and over the law points ahead to another way. Abraham was declared righteous, justified by God.

Why? On the basis of his faith, we're told in Romans chapter 12. So, so the law was always pointing toward Christ as the goal and specifically that Christ is the one in whom you must trust to receive the free gift of righteousness.

[29 : 43] righteousness. Righteousness for everyone who believes, believes in whom, we're told in verse 33 of chapter 9, whoever believes in him, the stone of stumbling Jesus, will not come into judgment, will not be put to shame.

So this is what it was all about always and this is still the message today. You must trust in Christ, the true Christ, but even just as importantly, you must trust in him fully and completely, him to supply the righteousness that you on your own can never supply.

You can never do it, you can never attain to it, you can never get there on your own, but if you will simply lay down your own efforts and just trust in Christ, the righteousness is a gift to you.

Because guess what? Jesus in his earthly life is the only one to ever fully, perfectly obey God's law. so Jesus, by his own life, has earned a right standing before God.

He has earned the pronouncement you are righteous, but he gives us that righteousness as a gift. He says, take it, take my righteousness, take what I have earned, and I will take your sin and suffer on the cross in your place so that when you stand before my Father, he will look at you and see my righteousness covering you just as he saw your sin covering me when he poured his wrath out on me on the cross.

[31 : 10] I keep using this trust language when Paul says believe. It's not an accident. You might have noticed that probably more than 50% of the time, I don't know how often, but more than 50% of the time when I talk about faith in Christ, I keep substituting the word trust and I do it week after week after week after week and you may have never caught on to that.

You may just think that it's just for a variety of wording, but it's not. Because when Paul speaks of believing or those who believe or faith, Paul has something in mind that I think is more weighty than what we usually assign to the word believe today.

See, in our common parlance, in our common English, we've mixed up the word believe with the word to have an opinion, words for having an opinion. opinion. So we'll say something like, you know, he believes that rap music is better than country music.

And all we're saying there is this guy's opinion is he prefers rap music over country music. That's just what he thinks. That's his opinion. And we use the word believe in that way all the time so that we've watered down its meaning.

Not intentionally, it's just the way that language works, it's the way that language develops. There will probably come a time in the future where translators decide to start using the word trust as a more accurate translation of the word in Greek but that time hasn't arrived.

[32 : 35] But we've watered the word believe down so much so that we often think that all Paul is saying is that we just have to agree with the knowledge that the people of Israel rejected.

But what he's really saying is we must trust in it. It's not a matter of you holding the opinion that these things are true. This is the matter of trusting in it so that when one of my boys stands up on a high surface and I stand before him and I say jump, I'll catch you and they look at me strange and I say you trust your dad?

Trust your dad. I'm going to catch you. Just trust me. And then they jump. Why? Because they trust me. They believe that I will indeed catch them. And that's what Paul has in mind here when he says that the free gift of righteousness goes to those who believe.

It goes to those who trust. Who really with all their hearts trust that Christ's righteousness is enough for them and they can give up their attempts at earning it and they can rest in his righteousness and that kind of trust transforms all of who you are.

It's transformative trust in the free gift of God's righteousness. and so we can say we can look around and we can say I don't know whether or not their faith is at the level of trust but I can determine whether or not their faith is placed in the truth.

[34 : 12] We can say that much. We can indeed. We can know at least that much as we try to discern who do I need to concentrate my efforts on in sharing the gospel.

For whom do I need to be on my knees pleading that God might save them? Well let's at least start with the people who do not know or accept the truth and then we'll move on to the category of people who agree with the truth but perhaps have not yet trusted in it with their hearts.

but we can at least start there and the thing that I laughed about this week is when I start there neither Donald Trump nor the Pope is a Christian. Neither of them believes in the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone.

They both reject it outright in the things that they say. The Roman Catholic Church pronounces a curse on anyone who believes in what Paul is teaching here. So the Pope he's judging someone's Christianity when he doesn't possess real Christian faith in the gospel.

He doesn't believe in the gospel. And Donald Trump by his own testimony says he's never asked God for forgiveness which means he doesn't even believe that he's a sinner so he's certainly not trusting in someone else's righteousness.

[35 : 23] So here are two men rejecting the truth that Paul says is necessary for salvation arguing because one accused the other of not being a Christian. I laughed this week and then I began to pray for these men that they might come to know the truth.

Sometimes it's funny sometimes it's comical the way that the world reacts to the truth and the way that they handle the truth and then it's crushing and it's painful when you realize that their rejection of the truth results in their being rejected by God himself on judgment day.

So we ought to be like Paul who ought to recognize that there is an objective standard there is a clear measuring rod so that we can tell for a vast number of people whether or not they are in fact saved without having to look into their heart.

We have test number one. Do they believe the truth? Do they know the truth? Do they understand the truth? And we should be like Paul and apply the test but then we need to be like Paul even more and we need to weep and mourn and pray over those who fail the test whether it's your child or your sister or your boss or your next door neighbor you need to look honestly at what they say yes indeed judge whether or not you think they're a real believer based upon that and if they fail the test don't gloat don't mock don't look down on them fall on your knees and begin to plead before God that he would enlighten the eyes of their mind and then after having done that give them the gift of the new heart so that they would trust in the thing that they have come to understand.

Let's pray.