

Romans - God's Heart Explained

Week #4: Why do we need the Gospel? (part 3)

October 20, 2019

Paul's letter to the Christians living in Rome is perhaps the most influential book of the Bible outside the four Gospels. Its influence lies in the way God's heart is explained, and how His heart powerfully interrupts our empty existence. The American Pastor, Charles Swindoll describes Romans as God's grace invading the sin-fueled storms of our humanity - a grace that puts an end to our emptiness by offering forgiveness, new life through Jesus Christ and hope both for this present life we live and what lies beyond.¹ More than any other book, Romans explains our depravity, God's holiness, Christ's redemption and what new life in Jesus really means. You cannot follow Jesus well without comprehending what Paul writes to the Christians in Rome.

Our Sunday teaching on Romans this fall will speak to some of these deep truths that we must grow familiar with: human depravity; justification through faith; sanctification in Christ; glorification in God. But the mind is never the target ... it's our heart that matters. So, while engaging our minds with the goal of renewing them, we will consistently target our heart - because God wants our affections not merely our assent.

Study Questions: The Struggles of the Religious.

Read Romans 2:17 - 3:20

1. Did you grow up in a "religious" home? If so, how did your home help bring you to Jesus? How did it interfere with finding Him?
 - If you did not grow up in such a home, what did you think about "religious" people who lived around you - neighbours and/or other family members?
2. Paul, a former religious Pharisee, points out three challenges that religious people struggle with and must get over in order to come to Jesus and follow Him effectively:
 - Pride. How does pride seep into every religion? Where have you seen pride take root in congregations that you have been a part of? Do you pride within New Life?
 - Legalism. What is it about rule-keeping that is such a challenge for the religious?
 - Do you feel set free by Christ from rule-keeping? If so, what has replaced it as you live to bring honour to God? What's the difference?
 - When has the church been guilty of legalism? Where do you see it today?
 - Posing. Playing the religious game to look the part is common to every religion.
 - What does Christian-posing look like? Where are you tempted and pressured to be a poser?
3. Even the most strident religious commitment leaves me feeling guilty, empty, broken and unsure of where I stand with God ... hoping that what I'm doing will be good enough.
 - How many people in the Cowichan Valley do you think confuse religious striving with faith in Jesus alone? How can we work together to remove this confusion?
4. Which is easier: living religiously, or following Jesus? Why?
 - Think of 5 practices that Jesus regularly embraced (for example prayer, attending the synagogue and honouring his parents). How were they more than legalism and religious posturing to our Master?
 - Now make a list of 5 practices in your life. How can you make these practices more than simply religious behavior?

¹ Swindoll, Charles. Insight for Living Bible Study Guide: Romans 1-5. 1977, Insight for Living, Fullerton CA. Back cover.