

Romans - God's Heart Explained

Week #18: How the Church cares for others.

February 9, 2020

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: What happens when the Church cares for itself?

Read Romans 12:14-21.

1. Take the first 10 minutes of your study - alone or as a group - and paraphrase these verses in your own words. If you are in a group, follow this up by comparing your work.
 - What part of this teaching impacts you the most? Why?
2. Who are your enemies, and how have they hurt you?
 - Have you been able to forgive them yet, or are you holding on to the hurt? What human responses to them have you committed or imagined?
 - Why is revenge & retaliation - real or imagined -so powerful?
 - What happens to your enemy when love & forgiveness replaces retaliation & revenge?
3. Read Matthew 6:12-15.
 - What happens to *you* when love & forgiveness replaces retaliation & revenge?
 - Is there a difference between choosing not to retaliate when wronged, and defending ourselves & others? Where is the line between choosing one path or the other?
4. Do you need to seek wisdom and counsel from wise & seasoned Christians about a wrong that has been committed against you?
 - Spend time in your group or with someone you trust talking about your hurt and your struggle to replace retaliation with blessing the person who has wronged you.
5. This instruction is among the most difficult in the entire Bible - it goes directly against everything Satan works for. So, pray for your life, and for the one who has hurt you. Ask God to reveal the source of the evil and the hurt that is flowing from it. Pray for supernatural power & healing and live in the freedom of God's healing of your hurt. Finally, if it does not make things worse, contact the person who has hurt you and tell them that you forgive them. Then, intentionally put the hurt in your past, leaving it buried in God's grace & forgiveness.

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