

# Romans - God's Heart Explained

Week #20: Prepared & ready for Jesus' return.

February 23, 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.<sup>1</sup> 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: Living with forever in mind.**

Read Romans 13:8-14.

1. If you had one year to get your affairs in order, knowing Jesus was returning:
  - How would you settle your relationships?
  - Would you be able to pay off your debts?
  - Would you take time for things you have been putting off?
  - Would your prayer life and church participation change?
2. Describe your response to verse 8 ... "*owe nothing to anyone except your obligation to love.*"
  - What would it look like for everyone at New Life to live under such an obligation of God's *agape* love? What would happen in our life together and in our Cowichan Valley?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. Clearly God wants us informed, prepared and ready for Christ's return. We may not know the exact date, but we must not be caught by surprise.
  - Where do you see God's dawn breaking in upon history? Do you believe Christ will return soon? Will another 2,000 years pass before He comes again? Does it matter?
4. Pastor Ken said that to read Paul's words that Christ was returning soon is to miss the point, which is that we, ourselves, have only so much time to proclaim Christ to the world. With this in mind, how can we take the time we have to demonstrate to the world what it looks like for a people to live together under the Lordship of Jesus?
  - Ken took time to distinguish between *kronos* (tic-tock) time, and *kairos* (God's forever time). Which are you paying more attention to? Why?
5. Paul's military language commands us to stop carousing, wake-up, put on our uniform and live in integrity as soldiers of Christ.
  - Where are you still carousing and struggling to leave your old ways behind for the disciplined life of a soldier of Christ? Are you ready for your Master's return?
  - Who helps you stay disciplined in your Christian pilgrimage? Who might you ask?

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