

Romans - God's Heart Explained

Week #21: Respecting and caring for each other.

March 1, 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: Jesus expressed in His Church - a case study.

Read Romans 14:1-15:8.

1. When you came to Christ, what hurt, brokenness and 'hang-ups' did you initially bring with you, and how did they affect your early Christian life?
 - Are there things that were "black & white" to you that don't really matter anymore?
 - What are the absolute essentials of our faith that God treats as non-negotiable?
2. Pastor Ken described how the Christians in Rome struggled with festivals, holy days and food sacrificed to idols, and then provided list of some of the issues Christians have today?
 - Were there topics on Ken's list that *you* have strong convictions about that *others* might have little or no conviction? If so, what is the story behind your convictions?
 - Can you see an area of life where you might be a weaker believer (to do so takes great self-awareness)?
3. Read again verses 10-15. The weak are commanded not to judge their stronger brethren, while the strong are commanded not to distress their weaker brothers/sisters.
 - What is the price God is asking both the weak & the strong pay? Is it fair, or this the right question to even ask?
 - How does following God's instruction in these matters show Jesus to each other?
4. If you are a weaker brother/sister, are you making the effort to grow and mature in the freedom you have in Christ?
 - Do you read the Bible - studying & apply it to your life in Christ? Are you attending a group, where you receive help & encouragement from older, seasoned siblings?
5. If you are a stronger brother/sister, are you taking responsibility to "parent" your younger siblings?
 - Are you making it a priority to meet & encourage young believers? Are you spending time carefully mentoring your younger siblings in how to follow Jesus?

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