

LIFE GROUP LESSON

When in Romans LAW & GRACE - Week of August 25

Introduction

The apostle Paul had a heart for all people to know God. Though Paul preached first to Jews, he felt his primary and ultimate task was to carry the message of Christ to Gentiles. Paul felt that in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female – but all were one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). This is one reason he urged believers in Rome to be sensitive to those weak in the faith. He urges the spiritually strong to be spiritually mature, to help those new-in-the-faith do what is right; build them up in the Lord and remember *“even Christ did not live to please himself”* (Romans 15:3a). When we emulate our heavenly Father, we will have patience and live in harmony with one another. Do you live to please God for the good of others, or do you live to please yourself?

Law and grace are not in competition but go hand-in-hand. As we are learning in this message series, the law is rooted in love and is graciously given so we can live in harmony with one another. God didn't have to reveal himself or his standard, but he did. Because he loves us; he expects us to love one another. Our love for one another proves we belong to Christ (see John 13:35, 1 John 2:9-11). Just as the law reveals the nature and character of God, Scripture teaches us and gives us hope and encouragement. Are you living into Christ's call to love? We may not all agree on the fine points of the faith, but demanding our way is the same as choosing not to love. Over-time, this will cause us to become as irritating and annoying as *“a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”* (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Background

In chapter 14 of Romans, the apostle Paul speaks to an issue we deal with today: harboring a critical spirit. Think about it, we are all quick to judge others over things we know nothing about, over things with we have no right to assess – how they live, what they wear, how they spend their money, how they talk, what they know. Refuse to look down on a man or woman over their line of work, their body size, their social skills, or how their children behave. We do not know what they have had to deal with. Instead, be kind and helpful.

The people in Rome in Paul's day were judging one another over food and the day of the week on which they chose to worship the Lord. People were coming to faith in Christ across the spectrum of cultural diversity, so Paul says, *“Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat... Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right. But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions”* (Romans 14:20, 22b-23a). Christ calls his children to show forbearance with each other.

Read Romans 15: 1-22

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

In the space below, write down at least 3 take-away's from these verses. Share what you have written with your fellow Life Group participants (or a friend or spouse).

2. What are you going to do about it?

Paul's goal was to preach the gospel where ears had never heard it. This is one reason why our evangelist friend and partner in missions, Joseph Otsin of Ghana, feels called to plant churches in the villages, many out in the bush. He says there are many teachers and evangelists who want to preach and teach in the cities, but hardly anyone wants to go to the more remote and impoverished areas where travel and accommodation is difficult. Like the apostle Paul, like our brother Joseph Otsin, we should live in such a way that we follow the plan spoken of in Scripture, regardless of whether or not it is easy:

Those who have never been told about him will see, and those who have never heard of him will understand (Romans 15:21, see also Isaiah 52:13-15).

Think of a time the Lord called you to do something that wasn't easy. Did you follow through? How did the Lord help you? How did he supply all your needs and provide people of like-mind and heart along the way? Share briefly.

3. How can we help you?

Probably not one of us as Christ-followers would claim to be theists or deists; yet, you may be living in such a way that you have defaulted to theism: you regard God as your personal God and say things like ‘my Jesus’ and ‘I’m blessed and highly favored’. Jesus does love you personally and you are blessed, but guard against thinking you have a corner on God. *“For God does not show favoritism”* (Romans 2:11). Jesus taught his disciples to pray, saying: *“Our Father”* – all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Deism is when we begin to put God way out in the distance, like on a far distant galaxy. When it is convenient, we call for him again. This is wrong. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ must be included in every area of our lives – we do not leave him out of anything! Are there areas of your life where you feel like God is your personal bellhop? Are there places in your life where deep down you want God to be far removed? Take some time and reflect. Ask the Lord to reveal truth to you. Be still and pray –

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Close in a time of prayer and reflection.

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

August 25: Job 16:1-19:29, 1 Corinthians 16:1-24, Psalm 40:1-10, Proverbs 22:1
August 26: Job 20:1-22:30, 2 Corinthians 1:1-11, Psalm 40:11-17, Proverbs 22:2-4
August 27: Job 23:1-27:23, 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11, Psalm 41:1-13, Proverbs 22:5-6
August 28: Job 28:1-30:31, 2 Corinthians 2:12-17, Psalm 42:1-11, Proverbs 22:7
August 29: Job 31:1-33:33, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, Psalm 43:1-5, Proverbs 22:8-9
August 30: Job 34:1-36:33, 2 Corinthians 4:1-12, Psalm 44:1-8, Proverbs 22:10-12
August 31: Job 37:1-39:30, 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10, Psalm 44:9-26, Proverbs 22:13

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Text: Romans 15: 7-22

PLAIN TRUTH

God’s love _____ us and drives our primary
_____ to _____ the _____.

1. Paul instructs us to be _____ in Christ and His
_____.

2. Trusting in the _____ and _____ brings _____,
which gives us _____ and peace.

3. Hope _____ in _____ brings the overflow of
the _____.

August 25, 2024