

Alignment (Week 9)

Small Group Lesson

The first eight chapters of Romans deal with a man's personal sanctification. In chapter 9 God will address our passion for souls.

Some experiences are too awesome to keep to yourself; a great restaurant, fishing spot or maybe a vacation destination. Whatever the experience, it was one that you wish everyone could enjoy. I remember the experience of hearing close up a top fuel dragster. They are the quickest accelerating race cars in the world. At 11,000 horsepower they are able to reach speeds of 335 miles per hour and can cover 1000 ft in 3.7 seconds! I once had the privilege of standing next to one as it was being started. Even with earplugs the sound is deafening! The smell of the exhaust and feel of that raw power thumping against your chest with every stroke of the pistons was unforgettable. I wish every man could experience that!

Paul's burden (Romans 9: 1) NIV

The apostle Paul understood the power of salvation. He had been transformed from death to life! He had experienced it himself and wanted desperately for all people to be saved. He actually wished he himself could be separated from God so that his brethren (Israel), could experience salvation. Pretty strong words!

"I have continual grief in my heart" (V.2)

After talking about how impossible it is for anything to separate him from Christ's love, Paul voices an amazing statement: "I could wish that I were accursed (separated) from Christ for the sake of my brethren..." He was more concerned about those in his family and friends who were lost than enjoying all his spiritual privileges. Who would make such a statement like this? Only someone who had a passion burning within him to see his brethren saved. Moses said the same thing about his people. "...If You will, forgive their sin, and if not, please blot me out of Your book which You have written!" (Ex. 32: 32).

We must come to the point where we have a continual burden for those we know and love who do not yet know all that Christ wants to do for them. What kind of heart does this represent? Someone said "If you Christians really believe there is a hell, you would be begging people not to go there!" There are 300 million people in the United States and billions on the earth who are not right with God that need to hear. We must keep the fire in our heart blazing for the lost. This is why we are looking today at the topic "If they only knew".

Alignment Question: How many people in your circle of friends are not saved? Does it grieve you to know that if they die in their current state they will spend eternity away from God? Have you had an opportunity to share Christ with them? What was that like?

The Danger of Complacency

“Complacency” is “a feeling of being satisfied with how things are, and not wanting to try to make them better.” So often we see the world around us through complacent eyes. As long as my family is saved, fed, safe, warm, everything is ok then we are satisfied. Paul had such a burning passion in his heart for those around him that he actually grieved over them. Complacency is a trap. It will move us into a place of inactivity when it comes to ministering to others.

In the book of Revelation chapter 3:14-17, Jesus has an issue with the church at Laodicea. He tells them that they have become lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. The problem with the Laodiceans was they had become complacent. They had become wealthy and thought they needed nothing, not even God. Jesus' rebuke to them was basically; You make me want to throw up (vs.16). We need to stay burning for the souls of men and not get complacent to the souls around us who are in darkness.

Alignment Question: When our hearts come into alignment, we are asking God to give us His heart. This includes His heart for souls. Be honest. How complacent have you become about the salvation of others? Are you bold enough to pray that God would light a passion in you for souls? How about a daily prayer asking for opportunities to share your faith?

“If they only knew...”

There is a story of a elderly couple who dreamed of going on a cruise. They scrimped and saved for years to afford their trip of a lifetime. One day they finally had enough to purchase tickets. They packed cheese and crackers to eat on their trip knowing they could never afford to eat the luxurious dinners they would serve on the ship. On their cruise they could see and smell the wonderful meals in the ship's dining room. Each evening they would go back to their cabin and eat cheese and crackers just being thankful they were on the ship. At the end of the voyage the ship's captain saw the elderly couple and asked why he had not seen them in the dining room the entire voyage.

With embarrassment they confided to the captain that they were not a wealthy couple and knew they could never afford the luxurious meals on the ship so they had been eating cheese and crackers in their cabin each night. The captain looked at them with disappointment and said “Didn't they tell you, all of the meals were included on your ticket. It was all paid for!”

Paul's heart broke for his people who were missing all that Christ had purchased for His Bride. Much like the couple on the cruise, there are so many who could be enjoying the benefits of being a part of God's family, His presence, covenant relationships, the Word, ministry, promises (v. 4). The greatest tragedy of all is they are missing out on knowing Christ, the greatest person who has ever lived.

Alignment Question: What does a life without the benefits that Christ provides look like? How do you recognise a lost man? What indicates to you that a man could be a lost soul? Does your heart break for them? Are you ready to be bold enough to be used as a witness for Christ?

Prayer: Father, we thank you for our salvation. We have been forgiven of our sin and transformed by Your power. We consider ourselves beyond blessed to be able to enjoy this wonderful relationship with you and all the benefits that it provides. Help us to not grow complacent in our attitudes concerning those around us who have not yet come into a saving relationship with You. Help our spirit to be sensitive to those who are still walking in darkness. Give us the opportunity and the boldness to speak to them. Keep our hearts tender towards them and we pray for receptive hearts within them that are ready to receive the Word of life. Thank you for your great love for the souls of men and help us to be sensitive to Your voice and obedient to Your direction, In Jesus name, Amen.

Leader: Take time to pray for the men in your group and encourage them to join together for an outreach to your community or an individual in need. Pray for one to two men from each member for an opportunity to sow some seed this week. Follow up next week at the beginning of the meeting to see how it went.