

Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 161 - To Whom It May Concern (Romans)

Something for Everyone

Most of Paul's letters were to churches and people he knew. When he wrote to the Romans, he was writing to a group of people he was yet to meet.

- What might be the difference about a letter or e-mail you write to someone you didn't know compared to someone you did?
- Why would it be more likely for Paul to write a general letter about theology, instead of addressing some specific issues he might have heard the Roman Christians were working through?
- What particular value could a letter like Romans have for us, who live nearly two thousand years after Paul wrote it?

Not Good Enough

Paul opens his letter exposing the failings of the Gentiles; then he turns his light on the Jews who have also fallen short. No matter who we are, each of us can find ourselves in one or the other of these sections—or both!

Writing about the Gentiles in Romans 1:18-32, Paul describes a people who exchanged the truth of God for a lie and are consumed with following their dark and sinful passions.

- Describe how that passage is still being played out by the people in our country, who live without God in their lives.
- Which people do you see as giving their tacit approval, even if they are not participating in certain sinful behaviors themselves?
- What is this doing to the heart and soul of our culture?

When Paul speaks of the Jews in Romans 2:1 to 3:20, he points out how the Gentiles are being affected by their stubborn rebellion against God's Law: "For, as it is written, 'The Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you'" (Romans 2:24).

- In what ways are we Christians dragging down our own culture?
- How does our selfish pride as Christians impair our witness to our unbelieving neighbors?
- Why is it important for Paul to remind us how easy it is to slip into a selfish and sinful frame of mind?

Righteousness apart from the Law

Starting in chapter 3:20 Paul shows us our salvation rests completely in God's hands; there is nothing any of us can do to earn God's forgiveness and save ourselves.

- Why do some people find this impossible to accept?
- What comfort do you draw from realizing there is nothing you need to *do* to be saved?
- After we have been saved by God's grace alone, why is it still important for us to live godly lives (without slipping into the thought that somehow we've saved ourselves by virtue of the good works we do)?