

Knowledge & Zeal

It is not unusual in our culture for people to think that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe something. In other words, the content of your faith doesn't matter as long as you are sincere. But the truth is that what we do or do not believe has great implications. It does matter! In the passage that we are looking at today, Paul analyzes the unbelief of Israel in his day. They were serious about their faith. They expended great effort in seeking God. But because they lacked knowledge about Jesus Christ, they missed God. This passage warns and encourages each of us to make sure that our relationship with God is based on knowledge rather than our assumptions or conventional wisdom or cultural norms.

Opening Discussion: Was there ever a time when you were zealous for something, but sincerely wrong (doesn't have to be just spiritual stuff)? If so, explain.

Read Romans 9:30-10:4

1. What does Paul teach about righteousness in this passage? About faith?
2. How would you summarize Paul's critique of Israel (i.e. the Jews)?
3. What does it mean that Israel had "zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge" (v. 2)?
4. In what sense was Israel ignorant of the righteousness of God (v. 3)?
5. What does it mean that "Christ is the end of the law" to all who believe (v. 4)?

Steve said:

This passage has two main implications. First, each of us needs to make sure that we have accepted God's righteousness through faith in Jesus (instead of trying to establish "a righteousness of our own").

6. Was there ever a time when you, like Israel, sought to establish a righteousness of your own? If so, explain?
7. Are there any ways that you sometimes continue to struggle with such thinking (i.e. that your standing before God is based on something other than Jesus)?

Read Colossians 1:9-12

8. Paul prays that the Colossian believers would be filled with the knowledge of God's will. What does such true knowledge result in according to these verses?

Steve said:

The problem, however, was that their [i.e. Israel] zeal for God was "not according to knowledge"; it wasn't informed by the truth. Throughout Scripture knowledge is a precious commodity - something to be pursued, understood, and lived out. When it comes to our relationship with God, it's not enough to be sincere and to try hard. Our relationship with God needs to be informed by what is actually true about Him

9. Practically, what are some ways that we can pursue and understand truth about God?