

The Epistle to the Romans

Ch. 8-A

Do you think celebrity chefs Wolfgang Puck and Emeril know what refreshments are to be served at “karma parties?” The answer, of course, is ... “just desserts.” Don’t get it? You will.

To make sure we “get it,” God uses Romans to announce that we’re made right with God by trusting Jesus’ good works, not ours (3:21-24). As a Roman citizen deep in Jewish legalism and Greek culture, Paul was God’s pick to evangelize the non-Jewish world, a breakout market for the Gospel. Peter and his mates agreed that Paul gets the Gentiles while they target Israel (Galatians 1:11-12; 2:8-9).

Christ gave Paul a grace-on-steroids gospel he called the mystery” and “the secret” (Ephesians 3:1-12). There were bogus gospels then and now (Galatians 1:6-9). One telepastor grins, “As long as you're doing your best and desire to do what's right according to God's Word, you can be assured God is pleased with you.”

Michael Horton disagrees in *Christless Christianity*: “The best efforts of the best Christians on the best days in the best frame of heart and mind with the best of motives fall short of true righteousness and holiness that God requires.” But “God has satisfied His justice and reconciled us to Himself through the life, death and resurrection of His Son.” **Let’s read Romans 7:7-8:4 (p. 332, Msg).**

Romans Rewound *Chapters 1-7*

God has revealed Himself to everyone through Creation, writing His laws on our consciences. So all are guilty – no excuse. Paul’s shocking news is that Christ proactively served every man’s death sentence, triggering God’s total forgiveness for all sin! We become right with God by accepting His pardon (3:26). Is that a license to “sin gone wild?” “Get serious!” Paul infers (1 Corinthians 10:23-24).

God’s Spirit comes to live in our spirit, giving us “peace **WITH** God.” We have the “peace **OF** God” since we’re no longer controlled by “works-righteousness” and can now choose *not* to sin (Titus 3:5-7). Then why feel obligated to the law’s undoable demands? That’s as impossible as listening 24/7 to “Pants on the Ground!”

Habits are hard to break; just ask Chicago, the band. As believers keep sinning, they assume they’ll have “hell to pay!” We want to do right, but we keep screwing up, fighting an undertow of wretched remorse. But, thank God, our position in Christ, His promises and His presence in us remain unchanged (Galatians 2:20)! That’s grace!

Jesus dealt with sin for good at Calvary. "Father, forgive them...It is finished." All sins pardoned. Period. We have God's irreversible approval (Ephesians 1:13-14). **Let's go to God's Diary and read Romans 8:1-39 (p. 332, Msg).**

Outrageous Good News Romans 8:1-4

Written by Paul in 57-59 A.D., this may be the greatest chapter in the greatest book ever written. From "no condemnation by God" to "no separation from God," it's what the risen Jesus revealed to Paul after his blinding, yet eye-opening conversion (Ephesians 3:1-12).

Prior to Christ's resurrection, man met God only through Judaism's countless regulations (Galatians 4:8-11). Forgiveness was temporary (Galatians 3:19). But Jesus destroyed the power of sin and death. Trusting Him, we're off religion's treadmill of knowing what's right but blowing it because the "law of sin and death" is: you sin, you die (Colossians 2:13-23). No more wretched roller coaster rides!!

Author Graham Cooke: "...it is in the nature of God to be totally and intentionally good to us." Many look "at their circumstances rather than at the nature of God ... An immature Christian wants to be rescued from difficult situations. A more mature individual recognizes the growth opportunity in each circumstance."

When believers sin, they pay the consequences in this life, but their relationship with God is never in jeopardy (8:38-39, 11:29). Don't you love it when God says, "I'll never leave nor forsake (condemn) you" (Hebrews 13:5; Jude 24-25)! Our destiny's not dependent on our *behavior*. Only God can reproduce Christlikeness in us (Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24)! The Potter and the clay.

God requires 100% obedience to His laws; Christ's perfect law-keeping is credited to all who trust Him (Colossians 2:10, 13, 14). Because God will never condemn those "in Christ," we'll never lose our salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:9). By condemning His Son to die in our place, God *gives* us what we could never *earn* - sonship in His family and eternity with Him, not in that "lake of fire" (John 3:36).

DISCUSS: What are your thoughts about God never ever again accusing, indicting, convicting or condemning you of anything?

Watch Where You're Walkin'! Romans 8:5-11

Before we trusted Jesus, we lived for ourselves (our “flesh”). As “new creatures in Christ,” He enables us to “walk in the Spirit.” Paul says whoever hasn't yet turned over his life to Christ is dominated by sin's impulses. No matter how moral, he's powerless to please God because he's spurning Christ's sacrifice (3:10-11).

If God's Spirit is living in you, you *belong* to Him. If not, you don't belong to Christ (Galatians 6:8; Titus 3:3-7). You're in or out (1 John 5:12). Saying “I *hope* so” is unacceptable on God's “Gong Show.”

DISCUSS: What does “walking in the Spirit” look like?

Who Holds Your IOU? Romans 8:12-14

Before serving Christ, we actually served God's enemy, Satan. I know; that stinks, but God minces no words: “You're for Me or against Me” (Matthew 12:30). We may look pious, but God cares only about what we've done with His Son (Matthew 7:21-23)?

2,600 years ago Old Testament prophet Ezekiel foresaw that God would one day “put (His) Spirit in you, and you will live ...” (Ezekiel 37:14). With the Holy Spirit living in us, our obligation to Satan has been forever severed. We're now debtors to God, equipped to live according to His nature (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Having established that the believer's spirit is inhabited by God's Spirit, Paul sends a strong warning. (1) To those who have not surrendered to Christ, if you don't do it before you physically die, you'll die spiritually in a never-ending “lake of fire.” (2) If a believer doesn't “kill” sin before knowingly doing it, he'll suffer the loss of enjoying God's presence in his life. (3) God may take a flesh-driven believer to heaven to remove him from an evil situation (Acts 5:1-11). This “death” does not contradict Paul's teaching about the believer's security in Christ. Text without context is pretext.

DISCUSS: Why is death so uncomfortable to contemplate?

Get What's Coming To You Romans 8:15-17

We can choose to live in the victory Christ gave His life to give us. His Spirit confirms to believers that we belong to God, and as *co-heirs* with Jesus, we can approach Him as our “Abba” (Daddy).

Michael Horton sums up: “Salvation from start to finish is His work for us, not a matter of saving ourselves or cooperating with Him. It's a divine rescue operation.” Religion claims we're basically good at heart. But Paul knows the truth, i.e., if you're not “in Christ,” you're condemned to face God's judgment. When you've breathed your last, it's

too late to decide. “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Tomorrow is not guaranteed. Why not accept God’s forgiveness today?

His Deal

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